

# Naga Festivals



Editors

Dr. M. Horam

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# ***NAGA FESTIVALS*** ***(LUI-NGAI-NI)***

**Editors:**

**Dr. M. Horam**

**Dr. R. Horam**



**Sunmarg Publishers & Distributors**

H.No. 36, Maidan Garhi, New Basti,  
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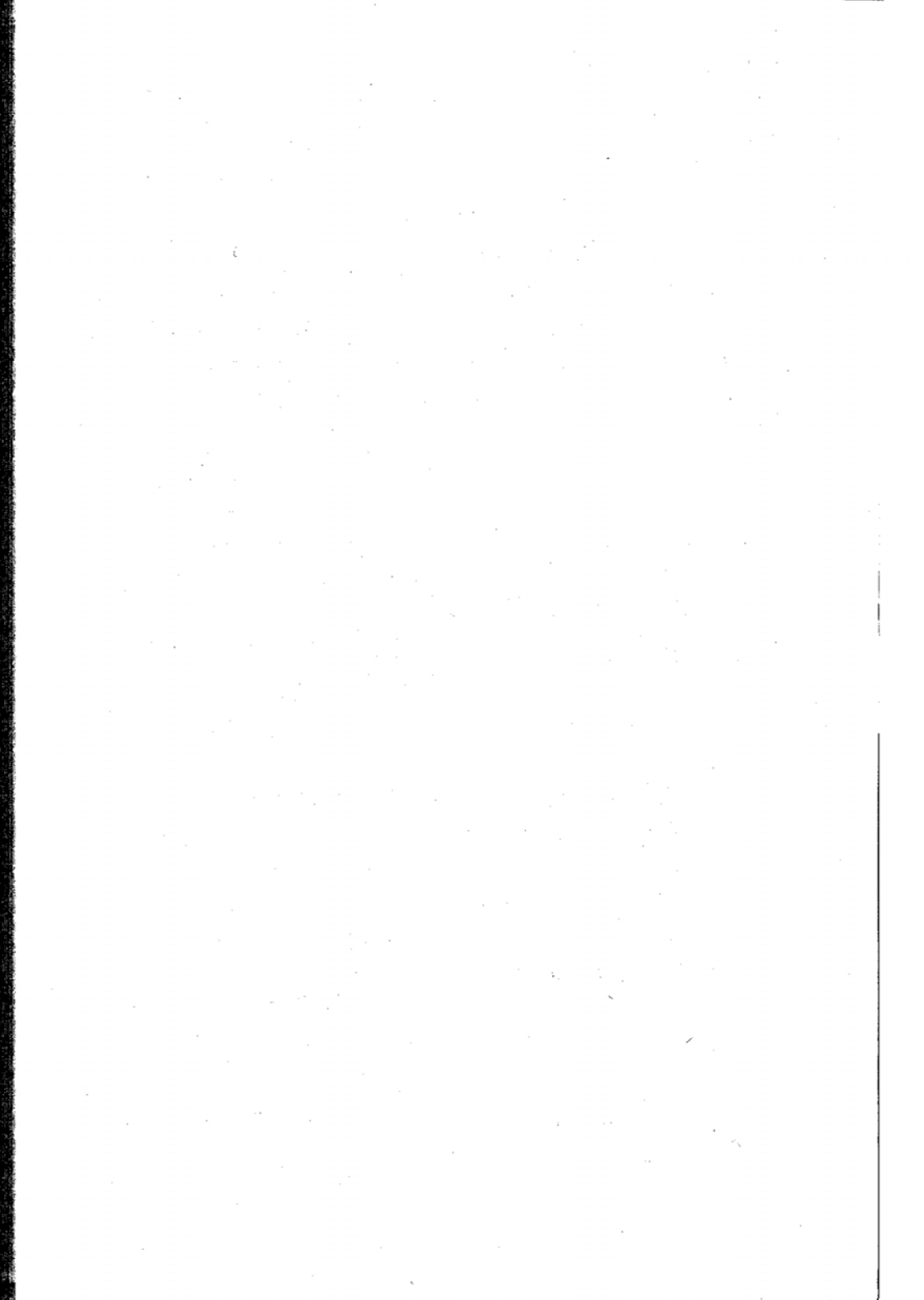
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## *Dedication*

**This book is dedicated to the  
ancient Nagas who taught me the  
meaning of wisdom.**





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Taking this opportunity, I am delighted to acknowledge some of the people, who encouraged, contribute and suggest in this work forming into book form.

First of all, thanks to all article contributors and well wishers. My passions for traditional cultural heritage since childhood lead me to collect many traditional cultural photographs some of them are inserted in this publication. Apart from my collection there are some photographs contributed by different peoples to name some of them are. Tekhe Mero, Reisang Horam, Chungmi Horam, Thotreichung Kaping, T. Solomon of Somra, Worthing Horam etc. I appreciate and value their contribution.

This book is a joint venture with my Uncle Prof. (Dr) M. Horam, whom I have much love and regards. He always stands behind me when I needed him most. Indeed I am blessed and proud to be his nephew. Thanks to Sunmarg Publishers & Distributors for publishing this book in time.

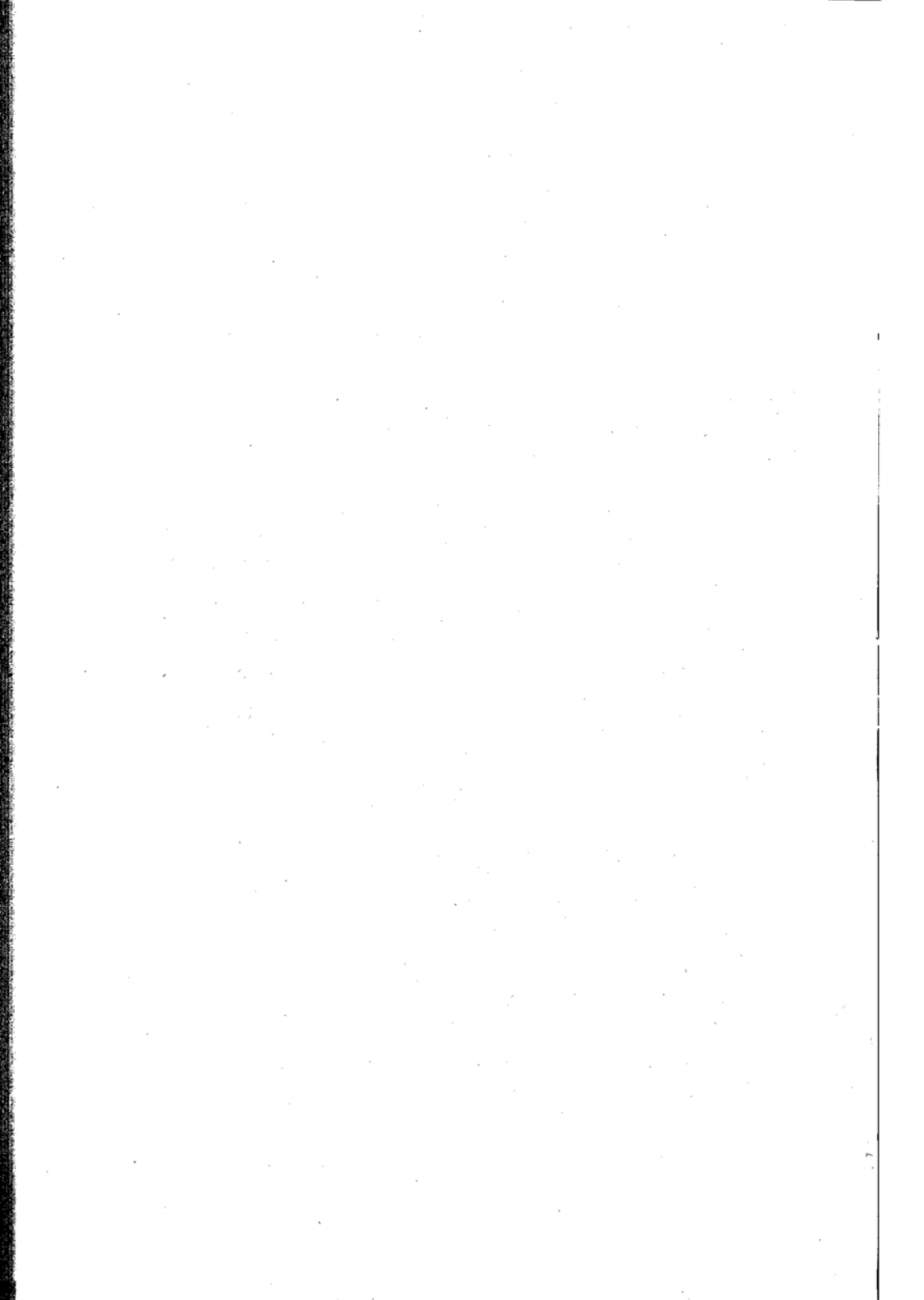
Above all thanks God for everything.

Dated

25<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Imphal

***Dr. Ringkahao Horam***





# Introduction

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This book was never originally intended to be a book. It is a collection of articles written by different persons from different communities. In order to maintain authenticity of the articles, the editors have not changed the style, language and even some of the spellings. The Purpose, therefore, was not to try to come up with a book, but to help the readers informed about rich Naga culture. It is hope that people who read this shall find a little bit of help in better understanding of Naga Culture. This book is comprised of the old Naga festivals; much of them, therefore, perhaps deal with matters, which are no longer of topical interest; but it may still be of interest to many Nagas who are working for their cultural awakening. Festivals, songs, and dances are past history now, but sometimes it is worthwhile knowing that past in order to know better the present.

If some of these writings offend anyone, I apologize.

This book tries to convey something of the lives and feelings of a people who lived in doll-states; something of their intense love for that world, and their trust in it.

In whatever measure the book succeeds, it is due to my students who by their obedience and co-operation, by their example have taught the way to understanding. More than any, I must thank the article contributors who responded my approach,

not necessarily without emotion, but careful and scientific impartiality.

Finally, I must acknowledge a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid to all those men and women who can neither read nor write but who are infinitely wise, and who taught me something of that wisdom.

January 2015

*Dr. M. Horam*

Imphal.

# **Name of the Naga Tribes**

---

## **INDIA:**

- |             |                   |
|-------------|-------------------|
| 1. Anal     | 2. Angami         |
| 3. Ao       | 4. Chakesang      |
| 5. Chang    | 6. Chiru          |
| 7. Chothe   | 8. Lamkang        |
| 9. Liangmei | 10. Lotha         |
| 11. Mao     | 12. Maram         |
| 13. Maring  | 14. Monsang       |
| 15. Moyon   | 16. Namshik       |
| 17. Nocte   | 18. Kalya Kongnyu |
| 19. Kharam  | 20. Khiamungam*   |
| 21. Koireng | 22. Konyak*       |
| 23. Pangsha | 24. Phom          |
| 25. Pochury | 26. Poumei        |
| 27. Puimei  | 28. Rengmei       |
| 29. Rongmei | 30. Sangtam       |
| 31. Sema    | 32. Tangkhul*     |
| 33. Tangsha | 34. Tarao         |
| 35. Thangal | 36. Wangchoo      |

37. Yimchunger

38. Zeliang

39. Zemei

### **BURMA (MYANMAR)**

1. Dikhiri

2. Hemi

3. Hklak

4. Htangan

5. Khiamungam\*

6. Konyak\*

7. Leining

8. Mukhori

9. Pangmi

10. Phellungri

11. Pyangoo

12. Rangpan

13. Shangpuiiri

14. Tangkhul Somra\*

15. Tsaplo

\*Denote tribes living both in India and Burma.



## **PART ONE**

# **THE FESTIVALS OF THE NAGAS OF MANIPUR**



# 1

## LUI-NGAI-NI: GENESIS (SEED SOWING FESTIVAL)

- Dr. M. Horam

Lui-Ngai-Ni Naga Seed-Sowing Festival was born on 15 February 1987. The idea of having a common Naga festival was conceived way back in 1984 when a few Naga social workers and leaders expressed their views and importance of such a festival. Incidentally, at that time, Sri. Rishang Keishing was the Chief Minister of Manipur, Shri. Gaikhangam was the Minister of State for Development of Tribals and Backward Classes. Taking the advantage and opportunities of their positions, I initiated seminars to find out ways to explore the possibility of having a common festival for the Nagas of Manipur. As many as two seminars were held at Imphal, which was followed by a special meeting of the Recommending Committee. Of these Seminars, the last seminar was significantly important and worth remembering. It was held on the 10<sup>th</sup> May 1986 at G.M. Hall where Shri. Gaikhangam, MOS, and Shri. Benjamin Bane, MLA were the Chief Guest and the President of the Seminar respectively. Special mention may be made that Shri. Murung Makunga generously offered his house to be used as Office and kitchen for the seminars. Members of the Seminars honestly and sincerely grateful to him for his magnanimity.

I must mention here the service rendered by various student groups of different tribes who relentlessly stood by

us and the dream made into reality. Special gratitude goes to the students of Manipur University without whose service; seminars could not have been successful. In that Seminars more than 500 delegates participated representing from different Naga Communities of Manipur. As many as 12 papers were read; tribes who did not present papers also spoke on the subject and actively participated. All the views and opinions expressed during the seminars were minutely discussed. The Chief Guest and the President of the Seminars also gave valuable suggestions. At the end of the discussions, a consensus opinion was sought whether a formal resolution could be passed to work out the appropriate name and date of the festival. The participants passed the following resolutions unanimously:

- 1) Nagas should have a Common Festival one day in a year.
- 2) Fixing month and date would be entrusted to a Committee.
- 3) A Committee be formed christened "Recommending Committee" representing each member from each tribe. Co-coordinator of the seminar be ex-officio member.
- 4) Recommendations of the Committee should be sent to the State Government for necessary implementation.
- 5) Follow-ups and programs should be initiated at the earliest.
- 6) All papers and comments be published.

Immediately, the Recommending committee meeting was held on the 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1986 at Shri (L) Y.K. Shimray's residence, Imphal. Views and opinions were discussed thread-bare. Different possible names and titles of the festival were proposed and suggested.

Each and every name and title was studied and compared and after much deliberation, a Golden Mean was adopted and the Recommending Committee unanimously gave the name of the festival as "Lui-Ngai-Ni" (Naga-Seed-sowing-

Festival) to be observed every year on the 15<sup>th</sup> February, a Common Festival of the Nagas.

The Recommending Committee urged the State Government to declare the 15<sup>th</sup> February as a State Holiday every year. The Head of the State, the then Chief Minister of Manipur Sri. Rishang Keishing directed the concerned Administration to declare this Day of 15 February a General State Holiday; and that was done.

The first festival "Lui-NGai-Ni" took exactly 9 months and four days, i.e. from the day on which the Recommending Committee entered into matrimonial alliance with the Naga-Seed-Sowing-Festival hitherto called "LUI-NGAI-NI".

Ever since the inception of the Lui-NGai-Ni, I associated with its activities in my humble ways acting as the Secretary of the Festival. Later, however, the United Naga Council (UNC) took over the responsibility and the UNC President is the Convener of the Festival. Mention here may be made that there has been a tradition that a Minister or an MLA is the Chairman of the Lui-NGai-Ni for each year, thus there is no permanent chairman of the festival.

### **Backdrop**

Nagas, like many indigenous people of the world, do not have any written history; but there is of course, no way to roll back history and duplicate the past. Though the cultural diffusion in the past 200 years or so has caused many characteristics of Naga Society to become diluted or disappeared altogether; today Nagas are still at that point of time when general and fairly accurate picture can be put together because if much has been changed in Naga Culture, much also remains unchanged.

In Manipur alone, there are more than 20 Naga tribes living in well defined and contiguous areas. A few names may be mentioned here: Maos, Marams, Poumeis, Tangkhuls, Zemis, Leingmeis, Rongmeis, Anals, Mayons, Monsangs, Marings, Chirus, Taraos, Chothes, Lamkangs, Koirengs, Thangals, Kharams, Aimols and others. These Naga groups, though they speak different dialects and go by different

names, bear many similar traits and characteristics. They have more or less, with a few variations, common customs, traditional heritage such as festivals, songs, dances, religion, oral history legends, and arts etc. Despite their apparent differences in their spoken dialects, they do have strong common ties both culturally and politically. As indicated earlier though Nagas are rich culturally, they do not have a common festival which could be observed by all the Nagas, one day in every year. In order to fill up this vacuum, this 'Lui-Ngai-Ni' has been adopted as a common Naga festival for all the Nagas. The boundary of Lui-Ngai-Ni is confined not only to Manipur but also it embraces the entire Naga communities living across the border and other states. The philosophy behind the Festival is, therefore, to rediscover some of the wisdom of the ancient Nagas which lie buried in the form of songs, dances, stories and legends etc. Indeed, these priceless values project onto the screen; the fabulous pictures of men's fears, aspirations, wars, achievements together with their ancient festival, religion and god's loving action in favour of men.

Surely, what may well be the most important chapter of the Naga history is being enacted today. Nagas have been busy making history unconsciously in the past six or seven decades. In the making of such a history, in the absence of any written record, Nagas will heavily rely on their traditional stories, legends, oral history which are displayed in the form of dances and songs handed down from generation to generation, father to son, through word of mouth. There are stories, legend songs and dances as there are Naga tribes; they link the past with the present and project the present on to the future. Songs and dances delight every man, woman, old or young, for they repeat in colorful terms man's experience interwoven with god's saving love for man as well as man's response to his successes and failures, to his hopes and disappointments, to his joys and sorrows.

In the world of men, as in nature, contrasts are sharp in the lands where various Naga live. The land of the Nagas offers to anthropologists, sociologists, administrators, and philologists' inexhaustible treasures. No other part of the North-East or for that matter, the rest of the Indian Continent,



can boast of greater diversity of tribes, peoples and dialects within the same area. People of ancient Naga culture, the so-called primitive lived here for hundred of centuries. Here we find people who have well-developed culture deposits; however in the absence of written literature and script, these treasures have not been subjected to scientific research and investigations. And these different worlds of men, customs, traditions and cultures have existed for centuries and still exist to this day; and thus upon these fabrics must the Nagas build, in spite of slow and toilsome work, but surely and gradually, adding stone upon another, their future history. The glories handed down in the form of legends, stories and songs and dances provide a welcome respite to the Nagas and are particularly enjoyable in our days when man feels himself cut off from the past generation and lost to the present.

To make, revive, and compete other histories of making is surely not enough, at the same time one must admit that Nagas are no bare fossils. The ancient wisdom, energy, and culture founded on the rough sail are still there, thrust into the background for a while, yet waiting to come forth. Moreover, the awakening of Naga Society has already begun to resuscitate their culture and make a history for posterity.

We live today in world torn with hatred, jealousy, fear, violence and passion and the shadow of Naga aged-long tribalism hangs over us all. The Naga festival reminds to cast away our fear, petty squabbles, bickering and parochial outlook; this Lui-Ngai-Ni may not be appreciated by many today in this strife-torn and tumult Naga Society, but it shall have to be understood and appreciated sometime or the other if Nagas are to survive in any civilized form.

Dated: 15 February 1987, Imphal.

**Dr. M. Horam**  
Co-coordinator,

Lui-Ngai-Ni

# 2

## ANNEXURE - I

### **Proceedings of the Seminar on the Manipur Naga Festival Held On 10<sup>th</sup> of May, 1986**

A Seminar on Manipur: Naga Festivals was held on 10 May 1986 at G.M. Hall. Mr. Gaikhangam, Hon'ble Minister of State for Development of Tribals and Backward Class, and Mr. Benjamin Banee, Hon'ble MLA were the Chief Guest and the President respectively.

A large crowd, more than 500 participants' comprising of all Naga Tribes of Manipur and a few non-Naga invitees also participated to the Seminar. In all 12 papers were read. Tribes who did not submit papers were also asked to speak on their respective festivals. All the different Naga Groups, views and opinions on the subject were heard.

Papers were open to the participants for open discussions: every paper was discussed minutely. The Chief Guest and the President of the function also gave valuable suggestions.

Substance of the papers, comments, and suggestions were recommended by the rapporteurs. At the end of the discussions, a consensus opinion was sought whether some formal resolutions had to be passed. The delegates and participants unanimously agreed to take few resolutions to recommend to the State Government and appropriate authorities for implementing the recommendations without further delay.

Following resolutions were adopted:

- 1) Nagas should have a common festival day in a year.

- 2) Fixing month and date would be entrusted to the committee.
- 3) A Committee be formed christened as "Recommending Committee" representing each member from each tribe. Co-ordinator of the seminar be the ex-officio member.
- 4) Recommendations of the committee should be sent to the state Government for necessary implementation.
- 5) Follow-ups and programs should be initiated at the earliest.
- 6) All papers and comments be published.

## ANNEXURE - II

Recommending Committee held its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1986 at Y.K. Shimray's residence. Members discussed at length the Naga Festivals, themes, implications and also the differences and similarities of the various festivals.

The members of the Recommending Committee agreed that despite the different names of the festivals and their local peculiarities, all the festivals falling on December, January, February, and March have common characteristics. All the festivals have agricultural bias; majority of the Festivals of that nature fall on either early part of February or later part of February. Therefore, the members arrived at a consensus opinion and adopted a "Golden mean" to work out for a common festival of the Nagas. All members suggested various possible names of the festivals such as Naga Seedling Day, Naga Cultural Awakening/Revival Day, Naga Festival Day, Naga Farmers' Day, Naga Seed-Day, Naga New Year and Naga Seed-sowing Festival and so forth.

Each and every title was discussed; pros and cons, suitability and gracefulness of the name was examined. For instance, Naga New Year was discussed. Though the title is tempting, it will have several difficulties for practical application as there is no such Naga Calendar, that each tribe has its own Lunar calendar which is yet to be developed. Therefore, the members selected Naga Seed-sowing Festival as the most appropriate one under the given solution.

The Recommending Committee thus recommended:

Title of the Festival : Naga Seed-sowing Festival (Lui-  
Ngai-Ni)

Month: February

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> February every year

It is further decided to forward this recommendation to the State Government for necessary implementation.

**Dr. M. Horam**

Co-coordinator

Prof. & Dean

School of Social Sciences,  
Manipur University.

# 4

## FESTIVALS: A SYNOPTIC VIEW

**Dr. R. Horam**

Associate Professor

HOD. Dept. of Political Science

Modern College, Imphal.

A festival is a specific occasion for a particular peoples, community, religion or state, relating to feasting, or celebration, usually with a social or religious significant. It is an events staged by a community with its special occasion having its believes system and goals. Festivals are associated with celebration entertainment, feasting, rites etc, which create a sense of belongingness of religious, social, or geographical groups. Moreover, it provides a sense of unity and integrity among the people.

In ancient Greece and Rome, festivals such as Saturnalia were closely associated with social organization and political processes as well as religion.<sup>1</sup> However now a day things are changing, in modern times. Festival may be attended by stranger such as tourist, who are attracted to some of the more eccentric or historical ones.<sup>2</sup> Hornbill festivals in Nagaland state and Sangai Festival in Manipur are some of the example in North East India.

### **Etymology**

The word "festival" was originally used as an objective from the late fourteenth century, deriving from Latin via old French. Its first recorded used as a noun was in 1589 (as

"festival")<sup>3</sup>. Feast first came into usage as a noun circa 1200<sup>4</sup> and its first recorded use as verb was circa 1300<sup>5</sup>. The term feast is also used in common secular parlance as a synonym for any large or elaborate meal or gathering. However, the word festivals are often refers to a religious festival rather than film or art festivals. But in spite of the word festival is coined and used in 13<sup>th</sup> century its practice and celebration (festival) are as old as human race because human being celebrate in one way or the other to mark any occasion right from the beginning of their existence.

## **Traditions**

Most of the festivals are based in traditions and entwine with culture and religious significant such as Christmas, Diwali, Hanukkah, Eidal-Adha, Lui-ngai-ni etc. Apart from it, there are some festival, which are base in historical significant events, seasonal change, farming like harvest, etc., which provides the impetus for a festival.

There are many types of festivals in the world and most of the countries celebrate them with traditional cultural events because the occasion is related with their social and cultural life of the past and they have desire to continue the legacy of it after all it is their identity.

## **Types of Festivals**

### **a) Religious festivals**

Religious festivals are celebrated in honor of God or gods. Some of the religious festival, which celebrates every year, does not have fixed date but it is determine by either by lunar or agricultural cycles or the calendar in use at that time such are Passover, Easter festivals and Eid al Ahda etc. There are some religious festivals which date is is fixed like Christmas.

### **b) Arts and craft festival**

This type of festivals are mainly based on creativities of different trade which are fixed from time to time to show, promote and exhibit sometime for

commercial purpose. Such type includes, literary festivals, music festival handloom and handicraft festivals etc.

c) Food and drink festivals

Usually in the festivals people dress up with the best costume with traditional or modern attire. Special foods are prepared and consume in community or in family. However, there are certain festival where particular foods or drinks are serves to celebrate to mark the festival. Such as the national peanut festival, pumpkin festival, orange festival, wine festival bread festival (khamui phanit) in Tangkhul, pineapple festival, Oktoberfest in Germany for beer etc.

d) Seasonal and harvest festivals

Seasonal and harvest festivals are observed all over the world depending upon their relevant situation. In the Alps, in autumn the return of the cattle from the mountain pastures to the stables in the valley is celebrated as "Almabtreeb". Dree festival is celebrated by Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh for bumper crop harvest. For the Tangkhul Naga "Wonzai" festival is celebrated to invoke "Ameowo" (Suprime God) to grant them a good harvest of their hard labor. Yarra festival is another seasonal festival of the Tangkhuls. This festival is mark with heavy feasting with different foods and drink to strengthen and fatten themselves getting ready for the hard work of rice plantation.

## **Naga Festivals**

Naga festivals are unique in many ways. They regard their festivals as sacrosanct and their participation is mandatory for everyone. They celebrate them with colorful traditional custom, feasting, and seasonal variety of relevant song, dance, and music are sung and display in the festivals.

Most of the Nagas festivals are revolves around agricultural. This is because even today more than 70% of the population depends upon agriculture.



Another remarkable characteristic of the Naga festival is that it is closely interwoven with social culture and religious elements. Therefore there are some festival which has many facet and activities and surprisingly it serves all the purpose. One of the best examples of such festival is LUIRA PHANIT (Lui-Ngai-Ni). It is also known as seed sowing festival. Let us examine the different dimension and facet of "Luira Phanit".

### **Luira Phanit (Lui-Ngai-Ni)**

As the winter is slowly fading and the season bird started chirping merrily heralding New Year and new season, the trees and its leaf become dry and brown and started fallen off getting ready for the new fresh shoots. The sky is crystal clear started blowing with fresh air. The unstoppable desire of heart spontaneously comes out in their lips singing melody folk song like "Luira Sangaiuwa hoksa sangaiuwa" (longing for celebration of Luira festival, longing for eating pork.)

All the village, young and old would like to celebrate "Luira Phanit" (Lui-Ngai-Ni) and more so by young boys and girls, because this is the season and festival where the girls would display their beauty in a dance known as "Laa Khamanui" (Virgin dance/beauty contest). On such festival, the neighbor village bachelor would come and watch the dance.

"Luira Phanit" is one of the major and longest day celebrated festival among Tangkhul Nagas. In fact it is celebrated for 12 days with different activities with specific significant and important, they are.

- 1) Luira Phanit is also known as "Seed Sowing festival" because in this festival their deity" Phunghui Kameo (god of wealth) is pray and propitiate for prosperous harvest of the current year.
- 2) This is also a festival of showing generosity to other irrespective of their villagers or outsiders. On this day friends relative and even strangers are invited and drink are abundantly and generously served. This is an occasion of feasting and marry making.

- 3) This is also an occasion of games and sports testing their strength and technique sports like tug of war, wrestling etc are taken up.
- 4) On this festival unmarried girls proudly attired them self with gorgeous traditional dress in uniform showing their beauty in a dance called "Laa Khanganui" beauty show/beauty contest all the villagers and outsider even from far away bachelor use to come and watched the show some even looking for choosing their life partner for marriage. Therefore, it is also a season and festival for choosing their partner.
- 5) In the later of the festival neighbor, villagers are informed so that they can participate in the trade fair. Different product from handloom, handicraft to food items are sold here.

### **"Luira Phanit Day wise activities"**

The first two days is known as KHASHIT or MEILAPHAT, which means cleaning or beautification of the village and arrangement of light (resin of pine tree). On these days, youth will prepare clean and arrange necessary things for the festival, where as parents are to clean garden and set fire and smoke upward indicating that Luira Phanit has started.

The eight day (8<sup>th</sup> day) is known as KHASO (Village open). Until this day from day one today seven it is taboo to inter and go out from the village. This is strictly observed.

The first day of this festival is also known as "SATHITHANG" which means a day of animal slaughter. On this day meat for the festival is arrange.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> day is known as "AWUNGSHI RUKTHANG" or WUNGREI RUKTHANG. On this day, the chief of the village pray and offer wine or bear to deity "AMEOWO" in his house in the family alter, imploring him to bless and grant them prosperous year having free from natural calamities and diseases.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> day is known as "YARUI RUKTHANG". On this day every household should perform ritualistic invocation in their respective homes at the designated altar of every house known as "THEIRUIKHONG". They invoke and propitiate "Phunghui Kameo" (god of wealth) for prosperous farming.

The 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> day, this three days is the most joyous and climax of the celebration. All the villagers particularly boys and girls adorn themselves with the best traditional dress including ornaments and headgear proudly display and variety of activities including games and sports like, wrestling tug of war etc are organized. However, the most important events which started performing from this day onward is "Laa Khangnui" beauty show or beauty competition. This dance is also known as "Virgin dance" because only virgin girl or innocent grown up girl have to participate in this dance. Girls who do not participate in such dance are suspected their chastity or question their morality. It is believed that when pregnant, immoral girl participate in such dance bad omen, or sign are shown during the dance. Every year the boys are eagerly awaiting these events because this is an opportunity to admire the beauty of women, and propose and choose for their life partner. The young girls known this therefore they try their best to mesmerized and woo the boys. The girl oil themselves from tip to toe with animal oil (No lotion in those days) and dressed up uniformly with traditional attire, covering their half body within necklace, bangles, khormashim, Huishon etc exposing the rest half of their body shine like reflection from the fresh stream water. Looking grand and stunningly beautiful, they swing and sung together in unison with the gentle clicking bell sound hanging from their head in the tip of the Huishon. The girls never get tire because they knew that their beauty is watched and admire by young and old and most importantly by the eligible bachelors.

On 7<sup>th</sup> day the most important ritual of the festival, take place on this day. While the villagers continue their celebration unabated the chief of the village along with his wife, with dignified dress went to the field and after performing ritual

by smearing the blood of chicken to the seed or on the paddy and offering chicken head to "Phunghui kameo" (God of wealth). They will performs "Maamaji, theimaji, khamashao" or Luikathui, here they will show paddy or seed in a selected small area in his field. Only after this, the rest villagers are permitted to carry on sowing all kinds of seeds.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> day while the festival continue all the householder along with their wife descend to their respective field and do the ritual invocation and offering like the chief who have done in the previous day.

The 9<sup>th</sup> day is known as "KHASHO" which means village is open for all. It is indicated by smoke up by burning garden of the village compound. Neighbor villagers travelers' seller buyers and visitors are allowed with their wares etc. for trade.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> day to 12<sup>th</sup> day the main activities is trading. In the earlier day it was barter system, which has been, replace by trade through money. Different kinds of goods from eatables to handloom and craft all kinds of items are sold and exchanged. Since it is wind-up Stage of the festival feasting, drinking inviting friends, and neighbor continue and the finale show of "Laa Khangnui" beauty show are performed.

## **Conclusion**

The above 12 day long Lui-Ngai-Ni festival explicitly shows that, it has so many dimension and purpose of the festival, which is unique in itself. In short, it is a ritual invoking to god of wealth for prosperous and good year, in the beginning of the year. It is also a festival of games and sports, beauty show for choosing partner entertainment through singing and dancing and also great opportunity for trade. Hence, some of the Naga festival like "Lui-Ngai-Ni" is unique and rare among the festival of the world.

## **Endnotes**

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# 5

## THE ANAL NAGA TRIBE

- **BS. Angam Anal**, Ex-Advisor, (ANUM)

The Anal Naga Tribe is one of the major offshoots of the Pakan tribe. The tribe has its own distinct life-style of living and culture. Historically, the Anal Naga is known as the warrior tribe or the headhunting tribe. Geographically, the Anals occupy large area of the country to the South-East of Manipur. This area lies between the Imphal valley to the North-West, Churachandpur Dist. to the west, the Chin hills to the South and the Kabaw valley in the East. Though they confined to Chandel District, a number of Anal (NAGA) villages are also in Churachandpur District, Thoubal District, Burmese territory, etc.

### THEIR ORIGIN

The legendary origin of the Anals is told that they came out of "KHOL". The word "KHOL" means "CAVE OR HOLE". It is said and believed that the Anals had seen the time to leave their cave life where they had been to before. The Khol had an entrance which was covered by a huge stone. When anyone tried to come out he was eaten up by a savage man-eater beast which kept watch the Khol entrance. So for a long time they were helpless. In the succeeding time, at last two brave Anal heroes, viz, HANSHU and HANTHA engaged a big flight of birds (Pari birds in Anal) with the promise that if it helped them in chasing the beast, it could eat freely their paddy-fields for all time to come. According to their engagement, the pari birds flew in front of the man-

eater's face in a swarm thereby blinding the man-eater beast. Meanwhile these two brave heroes came out with their people, fought, and killed the enormous beast. There was a big function to celebrate their liberation and the head of the beast. Thus, the Anal Naga people came out of the hole and spread out over the Earth.

### **THEIR MIGRATION**

During the long migratory stage of the Pakan tribe (the Mother tribe of the Anal Naga) the Anals separated themselves from the Pakan tribe and underwent the nomadic life. They moved towards the better land where they would build their homes. Though there is no record to tell from where the Anals (NAGA) started their migration, it is common belief that the Anals came from Mongolia, through China, Tibet, Arunachal Pradesh, Upper Burma (adjoining the Naga Hills) and crossed the Irrawady, Chindwin and Ningthi rivers. There, they were lost in the wilderness of the Chin and the Arakan hills for a long time and then moved into the Lushai hills from where they moved into the Manipur and finally settled in the South East part of Manipur most of which area now comes under the Chandel District. The Anal tribe, being warrior tribe, always at conflicts with various tribes, perhaps because of this reason they migrated from one conquered place to next to conquer. The Anal Naga tribe claims that the (PATHA) memorial stones erected in groups on their burial places and at the gate of their villages on the hill sides in Burma, the Lushai hills and in South East Manipur, are ancient monuments of the Anal Naga in the course of their migration. Some of the erected huge stones can be found standing even to our present day.

Towards the latter stages of their migration, they have passed the following places:-

- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| (a) Atungol   | (b) Ranajol   |
| (c) Aijol     | (d) Kalembung |
| (e) Abunglong | (f) Phalbung  |
| (g) Tinsuwng  | (h) Thanlon   |
| (i) Kamkilon  | (j) Kupibung  |
| (k) Dutejol   | (l) Hekha     |

Somewhere near Hekha region, the Anal Naga tribe splited into three groups. One group led by Angnal went towards north-east and established the present Anal Khullen village. The second group led by Khubung established another village called Khubung Khullen now.

The main group led by Lanphao established a large village comprising nearly 1300 (one thousand thee hundred) houses at Abuwng. Here Lanphao waged war with Kukis. On the surprise attack of the Kukis the villagers escaped towards the Anal Khullen and founded the present Lanphao Charu villages. From these villages shave come out the rest of the Anal Naga villages at present days.

## **CULTURAL HERITAGE**

The Anal Naga tribe preserved her cultural way of life by way of tradition. The Anal have distinct cultural heritage, which has been handed down from generation to generation. The Anals are well known for their richness in cultural activities. The Anal have different kinds of songs and dances for different occasions and purposes.

The Anals have a lot of social festivals which are performed according to their own convenience generally in the months of February and March. Some of the important cultural festivals are as follows:

- (a) **AKAM:** Akam is the biggest Anal cultural festival performed only by a rich man in honour of his wealth. A large amount of property and foodstuff is freely spent for the whole community for a long week. The rich man did so, in order to receive more blessings from God. Akam songs are sung and Akam dances are performed during this function.
- (b) **PHAMKA:** Phamka is the second most important festival. It is performed only by a member of the village Authority. When a person is elected or nominated as a member of the village Authority he has to perform this function. Cultural dances and songs will be the only activities.



- (c) LUNGPATHA: This is the third important cultural festival of the Anals. Originally, it was performed by persons who did not have any male issues so as to keep the memories of his wealth after his death. The man who performs this function sat in the centre of the spot and others dance and sing around him. Throughout the night, they drink, sing, dance, and carry on merry making.
- (d) HANESARKA: This cultural festival was celebrated just after the completion of the harvest. A jar of ZU (rice beer) was collected from every house and celebrates their harvested crops. Games like shooting arrows, wrestling, etc. are played as bet for a pot of ZU (Rice beer)

### **DANCES**

Different kinds of dances and songs are performed as befitting the different occasions.

WAR DANCE: War of victorious dance is only performed when a tiger is killed or the head of their enemy is brought into the village. Like that, there are so many dances. Akam dance, Phama dance, Harvesting dance, etc. Whenever the dance is performed, both sexes take part and move around while dancing. In all cases of dance there is a group of men called "KAMTANG" who are mainly for singing and drumming while others are dancing and sometimes dancers respond to the songs. The Anals have two kinds of dresses. They have ornamented dresses for dance as it is a must in their cultural festival.

The Anals have, throughout their turbulent history maintained their cultural identity. There is free mixing of both sexes and there is no caste system in their community. All families living in the village cultivate their own land. They pay no land revenue, income tax, etc. The rivers and forests belonging to them are at their full disposal.

# 6

## FESTIVALS OF THE CHOTHES

- Romeo Chothe

Chothe tribe is one of the smallest tribe among the 29 tribes of Manipur. Chothe is an ethnic tribe of Manipur, who migrated from Burma during the 16<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. It is also one of the oldest tribes of Manipur. At present 9 major Chothe villages are found in the Chandel District of Manipur. There is only one Chothe village called Lamlanghupi near Bishenpur in Bishenpur District.

Throughout the history of these people, we could find that their society had been more or less influenced by the Meiteis due to their long and intimate contact with these valley people. There were lots of similarities between the Chothes and the Meiteis in many aspects of life as a result of their long cultural as well as physical contact. Their way of living and construction of houses are very much like that of the Meiteis. Yet, the Chothes have a very distinct culture of their own preserving it since a distant past.

The culture and tradition of the Chothes have undergone structural changes with the coming of Christianity. The pre-Christian Chothe society worshipped god Pakhangba, also known as Nungchungba, as their traditional god. However, today almost all the Chothe population has converted into Christianity and thus their traditional worship has been abandoned.

The Chothe performed/celebrated as many as 7 (seven) festivals in a year before their conversion into Christianity. These festivals were associated with their worship of

Nungchungba. The following are short account of the 7 (seven) festivals of the Chothes.

**FESTIVAL COMMITTEE (Ashang):** In every Chothe village there is festival committee dealing with the affairs of all the festivals performed in a year and they are assigned with the tasks related to religion. This Committee is called Ashang in Chothe language and it is divided into different sub-committee.

1. **Tang-Uilin:** It consists of nine members represented by the nine sibs, one each from one sib. These nine members also hold nine different posts namely, (i) Hancha (ii) Hithang (iii) Hunchal (iv) Yupal (v) Potchoi-uilin (vi) Potchoi nao-pongpa (vii) Rui-uilin (viii) Two Rui-Tols. This group plays an important role in every festival of the village authority and the Tanguilin take charge of the authority one day after the celebration is opened. They supervise the affairs of the festivals.
2. **Renchung:** It has nine members with nine posts as that of the Tag-Uilin. Their duty is that every festival started by the Tang-Uilin is to be completed properly. They are responsible for the ending ceremony of all the festivals.
3. **Athim:** It also has nine members, represented by one member each from the nine sibs of the Chothe tribe. In this group again, there are nine different posts. The post of Hancha are viz, Parpa, Makanand, Raghsai. The main duty of this group is chanting mantras (Laiwa sonba). They are the magicians. Without them, nothing can be done if there is anything to be done, like sacrifices to god. All the rituals and rites are performed only by the Athim group.
4. **Thirsu:** It is also represented by all the nine sibs of the tribe, one member from each of the sibs. They also have nine posts as that of the others. However, the Hancha of this group is always held by the representative of the Marim sibs. They are the physicians of those who are the victims of wild fire.

5. **Ashei:** It has only four members, having four posts held by the representatives of Makan, Parpa, Rangshai and hao hulou sibs. In every festival, this group takes advantage of collecting wine from every house. They visit all the houses with dancing and singing which is known as "Inlam Pei" in Chothe language.
6. **Sapu:** It consists of nine members having nine different posts similar to that of others. This group has no important assignment. They just enjoy nominal membership.

These are the Committees/sub-committees who deals with the affairs of their festivals and worship of their indigenous deity called Nungchungba.

#### 7. (Seven festivals of the Chothes)

##### 1. YANGPALKA (YOUTH GLORY FESTIVAL)

It is the festival of youths. It comes off during the month of August. It falls on Sunday and continues for three days. Merry making, singing, etc. are the main items of the festival. A game called "Ruikai" is played between boys and sometimes boys and girls. However, this Ruikai is mainly contested by the Loams vs Loams. Girls arrange garlands for the competitors. Ruikai is a game of pulling rope holding the two ends of the rope by two different groups and pulling each other in each side until the other group is completely defeated. Before the commencement of this festival, all the village boys and girls work either at home or in the fields of any villager, who, in return for their service, would offer them Rinyubel (pot full of wine) for their use during the festival called youth Glory Day with merry making, singing chapels and prayer, etc.

##### 2. CHULTUK RHIN/TOLYUL RHIN (FESTIVAL OF BREAD)

It comes off in the month of September. It falls on Sunday and lasts for 2/3 days. The village Chief always hosts this festival. The villagers work in the field of the Chief and in return, of which the Chief agrees to meet

all the expenses of the festival. A particular dance called "HUCHAM-PALAK" is performed. Hucham-palak is a particular kind of dance, holding a sword and a shield in each hand. This is also known as war dance. In every singing, the Ashei will start singing first. In this festival, bread is prepared in every house and distributed only to the relatives, specially the nieces and nephews. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the festival, the Hloukal (Village Authority) and Rengchang attend the Ruishang (Village Court). They also work in the field of any villager who would offer them wine for their use on that night. This festival passes off with dancing, singing, merry-making, etc.

3. SABUHONG/SANGHONG RHIN (Harvesting Festival)

It comes off during the month of October and falls on Sunday. It is celebrated in order to pray their god to grant them a good harvest. Offering of wine and meat to god are the important items of the function. An animal is killed and all the sibs are given share each. Ruman Bak is performed during this festival. Ruman-bak is a private festival of the grandfather and grandsons. Grandsons kill animals and invite the grand fathers to dinner. The grandpa, after the dinner gives blessings to the grandson. This Sabuhong rhin is now replaced by the Christian festival of Harvesting Festival.

A game called 'Salu Tlik' is played between the Tang-Uilin and Rengchang. Rengchang holds a long and big log and Tang-Uilin tries to break the log into two parts. The moment the competition is on, four drums start beating from different corners. The drummers also join the struggling crowd beating the drums. This is called 'Hung-Tlan-Lut'. Dancing, drinking, eating, etc. are the main items of the festivals.

These are some of the 7 (seven) festivals of the Chothes in a year. Besides, there are many other festivals celebrated at private houses or festivals confined only

to certain clans or sibs. All the Chothe Festivals during the Pre-Christian era begins on Sunday only.

However, these Festivals are no more in practice in the Chothe community. All of them have already been replaced by the Christian Festivals like Christmas, New Year, Good Friday, etc.

# 7

## A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN OF THE MARINGS WITH FESTIVALS

- United Maring Naga Assembly (UMNA)

It is believed that in ancient time Marings lived under the earth (cave) below the earth's surface and that they originated from the East. According to the fable told by the Maring forefathers there are many stories relating to the origin of Marings and the traditional stories are found into two stages. 1. Inhabited under the earth (cave) and 2. Settlement on the earth. In this way if we want to write the stories of the Marings we have to write the stories starting from their life living under the earth (cave) first and then settlement on earth.

### **NAME OF VILLAGES UNDER THE EARTH**

There are three villages under the earth. They Were 1. Khulvi 2.Sanabung and 3. Chote ar Chotebung.It is believed that Marings settled there one after another.

### **UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS**

According to the unwritten mythologies of Marings the name of two persons were noted. They were 1. Rangmei and 2. Khase. In fact, these are not the name of persons but the names of the clans, Dangwawa. There is some confusion in these two tittles also. Somebody called Rangmei as Ko-om

and others called Ko-dun and the name of Khalse is called as Kopung but others called him Mopung. Though there is confusion, majority believed that Ko-om and Kopung are the correct title.

### **ORIGIN FROM THE EARTH (CAVE)**

The following stories proved that Marings first originated from "Kulvi Son song". Mythologically this village was situated under the earth. Scientifically this might not be true.

It was at Kulvi songsong, one day about half an hour after dawn, the sun began to shine in the east. At that time Ko-om (wangle, the blacksmith; Kopung (Phungrei) the blower, the two brothers-in-law went to the furnace. Kopung blew restlessly and Ko-om stroke heated irons with longs on his half hand and the hammer on the other hand. At that time one squirrel with ear of paddy known as Lhimtar came across at the spot. The name of the paddy was known as Lhimtar.

On the seeing that Ko-om and kopung chased the squirrel and when ko-om beat the squirrel by hammer and long in his hand the squirrel flew away leaving the ear of paddy grain. Both of them knew that the grain was one of the main foodstuff of human being and that news was known to all the people and decided to keep the grain carefully but it was not settled to whom the grain be kept. At last, according to the voice of astronomer it was resolved to keep the grain in the hand of Mrs. Shamruitar the old widow of Khulpuwa clan and born of Dangwawa clan in Tapu carefully. Accordingly, the said grain was kept under the care of Shamruitar and decided to sow the same when the season comes.

The season came all people had cleared jungle for jhumming cultivation and after burning the same it was ready for sowing. Now the rainy season came, all ready to sow but according to the astrologers it was first to be sown the lhimtar by Shamruitar for the first time on behalf of the all villagers. The first sowing was known as 'Khawaitha'. Accordingly Shamruitar sew the lhimtar grain the plants were so healthy and high that all on lookers even the wild animals



and birds were charmed to look at it and when the grain were about ripen it was to be protected from greedy monkeys and birds.

One day Rangmei ko-om along with his 30 hound (Uilou Shomthum) went to look after paddy. When he arrived at the field he saw the monkeys and later they escaped through a hollow cave ko-om along with his dogs passed through the cave and saw the vast land for human habitation and thought 'Oh' God thou had created such land for human habitation. So, thinking he came back overground and then the cave was sealed again by a rock.

Ko-om arrived to his house and narrated all the stories to his brother-in-law Kopung, My brother in-law Kopung I have seen a suitable place for settlement of human beings on earth surface, when I hunted monkeys. So let us go there for settlement". The two brother-in-law went along with their domestic animals there. First of all they used the cow to open the rock which covered the cave. But it was in vain, then they used buffalo, which was also in vain. They decided to use Mithun and by the prophecy of (Maiba yengca) of the astrologers they purchased one Mithun from at **CHOTHE VILLAGE** under the earth. When the Mithun was brought Kulvi Song it was given water and after it the Mithun cried on the east as such every one believed that everything should be successful.

**CHISU CHER (Cutting of hays):** Chisu Cher festival is performed in the month of April every year. However, there is no fixed date of the cave they let fly up one cock first through the cave and then one dog and lastly one bow was sent up, all of them gave sign of good news. But unfortunately all of them were eaten by a tiger called "Lhamluwa" or Sobi" and no human being could exit through it. Then Lhamluwa was killed by spear made of "Likshi" meaning glass.

When they came up on the earth's surface, Ko-om recollected that his sword "Langwamansham" had been forgotten into the earth. He said to his brother-in-law Kopung "My brother-in-law, I had forgotten my sword into the earth and I am to go back there to take the same". Ko-om went under the cave, but when he tried to come out, the cave was

found to be covered again, and said to his brother-in-law Ko-pung from beneath the earth "My brother-in-law as the cave was sealed could not come out from the earth's beneath and though I myself could not come out you please cut my fingers and keep it on behalf of me". Thus he stretched out his fingers "when you are suffering or getting difficulties on earth please send me message and whenever you are performing sacrifices use my finger in the name of "Yai" and I will help you". That is why even to-day the Marings use yai at the time of Sacrifices.

It is mentioned above that Marings originated from the Cave and believed that they first inhabited Kabo valley (now in Burma). Most of the ancient Maring villages are situated in Burmese territories, but some of them were found in Manipur. The name of the villages and places where they lived can be learnt from the funeral Songs of Maring elders. These funeral songs were used at the eve of burying a dead body and for admission the soul of newly died person by the soul of the afore-died one and it is called: Kha lhoushun" funeral song" in the form of lyrics in order. The names of the songs are as follows: -

1. Kulvi songsong.
2. Pamyang,
3. Washa phai (are found in Burma),
4. Yungphulingne,-
5. Chok tong (Burma)
6. Shekmeibung,
7. Sarchibung
8. Yanglhouthil
9. Moirangkhom
10. Kharung
11. Maship
12. Khungrulphai
13. Khochep
14. Daicham

15. Tuishimi (Tuikhani)

16. Youlbung and

17. Shabung.

The above names of villages are used by Dakhanga, Maring inhabited near the Manipur valley and the followings are used by Khayou Marings inhabited in the interior hill area. They are: - 1. Kulbis - ongsongs, 2. Choktong, 3. Pangan, 4. Mongsha (In burma), 5. Pannu, 6. Okle, 7. Lukilbung, 8, Makoubung, 9. Lamisa, 10. Ramshekbung, 11. Chalomthil, 12. Shangthil, 13. Romshekbung, 14. Yangtompe, 15. Khukyul, 16. Kungrul and 17. Pungyul.

Next morning they started to open cave and people prayed to God and by the bless the Mithun easily opened the cave. After opening Some of these are used by both Dakhanga and Khayou Marings.

## **FESTIVAL OF THE MARINGS**

Maring is a tribe of Manipur, situated in the South eastern Manipur mainly in the Chandel District. The people of this tribe are known as Marings.

Like other tribes of Manipur, Marings have its customary Festival, which distinguished itself from the people of other tribes. These customary festivals and the cultural history of Marings can be traced and cannot be forgotten the forgone cultural civilization of Marings.

The festivals of Marings can be divided into two groups, namely 1. Annual & 2. Periodical. Annual festivals of Marings are 1. Phungtuag, 2. Palsha, 3. Chisu cher, 4. Chada, 5. Lamlai, 6. Nungkap, 7. Loulaikarkum cher, 8. Pathan cher.

### **Phungtuag (repairing of Drums)**

Phuatuag is the New Year festival of Maring. This festival is commonly performed in the month of January of every year. There is no fixed date for the performance of this festival. It differs from village to village and is performed on any day of the month at convenience by the people of the village. As

the drums have been repaid some youths of the village will go from one end of the village to another end in the evening with the drums marching.

Bearing on the soldiers and will announce by beating it. And from this day onwards such marching i.e. Khulkhai will be performed up to the day of Chada. Following the day of this Phungtung the function of Laamaalka will be performed.

**PALSHA (Repairing of Gates):** This festival of Marings is performed in the month of March of every year. Like Phungtuag, there is no fixed date for this festival. The date of performance of the Palsha festival differs from village to village.

In every Maring village there were two gates at the two extreme ends of the village, which are constructed walls of big stones and pillars of woods. The ancient Maring ancestors used these gates as war protectors. The constructions of the said gates were performed with rites by the Marings and such performance with rites is done at the time of repairing every year. The festival. Before the performance of this Chisu Cher on one is allowed to cut hay or to bring hay into village for roofing the houses or huts.

**CHADA (Seed sowing):** This Chanda festival of Marings is performed in the month of May/June. Formerly, Marings used Zhuming cultivation in general. After burning of Zhums Marings prepare for sowing in their respective Zhums. By custom such chanda is firstly performed by the Khawailha of the village. Until and unless the khullakpa does not perform Chanda no one is allowed to sow seeds in his or her zhum. Chanda of the Khawailha is done with rites, sowing by other villagers will be done the following day of the Khawailha or any other day after the seed sowing of the Khawailha.

In some villages such seed sowing festival is performed by killing animals like goats on the alter in the form of sacrifice.

**LAMLAAI (Repairing of roads):** Lamlaai festival of Marings is celebrated every in the month of October. On this day the Road called Lhanyum is repaired by men and women of the village. In this festival, men and women bring gifts

and offer one another. In the daytime the people work in the said Lhangyum by singing songs of happiness in groups of male and female side by side and turn by turn.

After the work is finished in the evening the participants march towards Karngana (Resting place). At this time all males and females march with daos, spades and branches in hands and sing song with drums, like Hungleime, Hungleime keikhu lhangyun hungleime phalphoyo, phalpheiyo, keikhu lhuyang phalpheiyo, keikhu lhuyang phapheiyo, keikhu Dangvi phaipheiyo.

One day ahead of Lamlaai the paths of water tanks are also repaired. When the folks are gathered, public dinning is done at the Karngana. After dinning is over men and women depart for their respective home and at this time they bade farewell by singing farewell songs. Until and unless this lamlaai festival is done, no one is allowed to harvest their field and after this festival is over they begin to harvest.

**NUNGKAP:** Nungkap is the periodical festival of Marings. This festival is done at the interval of 5 years. However, there is no fixed date for the performance of this function. And the year differs from village to village. The villages of Maring Daklanga perform this festival in one year where as the kholeiya Marings perform the festival in another year but not in the same day or month.

On this day all male folks shoot arrows at a mighty statue of a beast called 'HONG' which is made of planks fully coloured and kept hung on a high tree.

During this festival male and female go from one house to another by singing and dancing day and night. And the host house enjoys offering meats and other sweets to the guests.

**LOU LAIKARKUM CHER:** It is observed as a Holiday after the completion of sowing, on this day all the villagers are confined in the village and abstain from any work. There is complete rest and everybody enjoys feasting.

**PATMAN CHAR:** is the last stage for seed sowing ceremony. After the completion of sowing paddy a particular

day is again fixed for the Patman Cher. This ceremony is conducted for the beginning of sowing other subsidiary food stuffs rather than paddy.

On this day the Charanga Khulpuva will perform the Ritual ceremony with sacrifice. This day is also observed as genna in the whole village.

The Marings occupy a vast area of different climatic zone. The Eastern (RILRAM) area bordering the indo-Burma Border has a dense forest. There jhum cultivation is carried out in large scale. And the western (TOU RAM) area is adjacent to the Manipu Valley. There is wet cultivation. Almost all the villagers have their own wet paddy field. The Marings are well sufficient in food. There is seldom famine and starvation, which is hardly known in the Maring Society. With own unique culture and tradition the Maring tribe is living with contentment in their heart.

# 8

## THE MOYON TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS

- Dr. G. Shangkam, M.U.

The Moyon Naga Tribe is one of the earliest settlers of Manipur. They live mainly in the Chandel District of the State and a few in Burma near the border areas. They were originally known as 'BUJUUR', and the term 'MOYON' got its derivation according to Nynthourol Lambubal<sup>1</sup> from the sale of spinning instrument called 'moithap' (in Meitei language) to the inhabitants of Bujuur-Khuwfuw<sup>2</sup> by Poireiton and his wife when they ran short of their food.

The Moyons were originally jhum cultivators. Each village cultivated the land in the same locality for defensive purposes and generally in a cycle often Years.

Their traditional festivals which had their own origin from time immemorial are still in vogue but to a limited extent. They were performed compulsorily and annually and were related to the agricultural activities in accordance with seasons. Being mainly agriculturists, their customs, culture, folk-songs, dances, etc. were centred round their occupation. In other words, they were agricultural oriented and therefore important even if it involved only the Khurfuw<sup>3</sup> and the village elders.

The festivals in order of sequence are Paam Lachii Ishaen, Sachii' chi, Saang rii khi, Saangkem, Buwren' peh, Vaang' chch, Mi dim etc. Of these only Saangkem, Vaang'chch and Mi dim

involved the whole people and are considered major festivals while the others involved only khurfuw and village elders and are considered minor.

The first festival performed in a new year was Paam Lachii Ishaen.

'Paam' means 'land', 'Lachii' means egg and 'Ishaen' means 'to find out'. It can freely translated as 'finding out with an egg of a good jhuming site'.

It was performed by Khurfuw along with the village elders at the village gate or Suwngkung. There he made fire out of mituk (flint stones) and placed an egg<sup>4</sup> over it after breaking its tip simultaneously uttering a few magical words that if the intended jhuming site was good, it should be known through proper and natural boiling of the egg. Therefore, if the egg boiled well it was taken to be a good omen and if not, it had to be boiled again till a good site was found. On such occasions only the village elders enjoyed in drinking.

The next important though minor festival was 'Sachii Chih' performed by Khurfuw sometime in the first week of May.

'Sachii' is any seed meant for souring during a particular Season or year 'Chih' literally means 'hold' or 'early' but here it means 'sow' so it means 'Seed sowing'.

On the fixed day, the village elders gathered at Khurfuw's house for this purpose. Drinks were prepared and the seeds (Sachii blessed by sprinkling rice beer over them by Khurfuws singing at the same time that the paddy must be fruitful. He took them to his field and performed the first act of seed sowing. Only then the other villagers would follow suit and in like manner.

After about two months of sowing the seeds, the paddy plants were blessed by Khurfuw. It is called 'Saang-rii-thi'.

'Saang' means 'paddy', 'rii' means disease' or 'sickness' and 'thi' means 'cure' or 'drive away'. It can be translated as "to drive away or cure the sickness or disease of the paddy plants."

Khurfuw made first out of mituk at the village gate and the villagers took it in torches of rolled cloths, went round



their respective fields and finally placing them on the tree in their fields. In the evening, the Khurfuw washed his hands with an egg and rice-beer in the belief that this act would free him from being the cause of death and driving away the animals and insects during the burning of the jhum fields and Sang-rii-thi. Drink was served to the village elders during the performance.

The next is one of the most important and major festivals called 'saangkem'. It comes from 'Saang' meaning 'Paddy' and 'Okem' meaning "to take care for". As it was celebrated to take care of the paddy plants in anticipation for a rich harvest in order to host 'Ikam'<sup>5</sup>.

On this day, all the paths and roads including those leading to the jhum-fields were cleared. At the village-gate or suwngkung the village elders made three mounds of earth in a time over which were planted three different plants - viz. phaeram, ngaringri and naesuw (all local names - the first two are plants and the third a tree). Beside them were planted tree twigs having two branches each in a line representing 'sarings'<sup>6</sup>. To the middle was tied a mithun figure made of mud. All these figures were surrounded by stones representing the Ikam festival dance party.

Significants: The three mounds of earth symbolized a good yield that was anticipated while other figures represented on Ikam festival.

It is observed in the belief that the people might have a rich harvest so that they might be wealthy enough to host Ikam.

The people gathered at Khurfuw's house where they were engaged in merry-making and dances. All the songs sung during this festival were related to the agricultural activities.

The next festival performed was Buwren'pch, 'Buw' means 'cooked-rice', 'ren' comes from the term 'are' means 'first' and 'pch' is derived from 'iimpch' meaning 'to cut off or break off'. So it means 'the first cutting of the paddy'.

The first act of cutting the paddy was not done by Khurfuw or any other man but by a woman from Ziingven clan only who must necessarily be selected by the village elders.

On the appointed day, she had to her field carrying two bundles made of fermented rice and cast iron. They were tied to two healthy ears of rice and cut. One was taken home and bury in her house while the other was left in the hut later to the taken to the threshing ground for offering prayers to the god of harvest to give high yield.

She also made an imitation of a threshing ground with twigs, mud balls and split bamboos. Some paddy were cut to be taken home for preparing the first meal which was offered to the village elders who in turn prayed for and blessed the family for wealth.

Then to wind up the harvesting season joyously a festival called 'Vaang-chch' was observed.

'Vaang' is an abstract term of being 'alone' or 'feeling of loneliness' 'chch' is derived from 'bashch' meaning 'to wind up' or 'finish' or 'to end'. The noisy atmosphere of harvest season came to an end. When all the crops were harvesting and this festival was observed as the last act of harvest.

The last crop usually harvest is job's tear (nim in Moyon). A certain family from Ziingven clan was requested to the last to thresh his crop.

On the fixed day, the people would gather at the man's field and helped in the completion of the threshing, accompanied by food, drink and singing. The relatives and friends of the Vaang'chch family would also bring food stuff and drinks which would be enjoyed by all. In the evening the whole party would go home in procession and behind it would be the village physician who must call out all the spirits of the people and exhort them to come home and finally commanding that no spirit must remain behind because the harvesting season was over.

Before reaching home, they would be received at a resting place by another group of people. From there they would carry the head of the Vaang'chch family or any other courageous man on local made palanquin in singing with drums and trumpets. On reaching home such man would donate any animal and drinks which all enjoyed with singing and dancing at the residence of the Vaang'chch family. In the

like manner any man could be carried and received the donations and enjoyed them the whole night.

The last festival of the year performed in the first week of January or Manni (in Moyon) to make the end of the year and beginning of the new year called Middim.

On such a day, all the village elders would gather together at Khurfuw's house and enjoyed in eating and drinking out of the due contributions of the past year.

From every house was collected a charcoal which would be powdered and kept outside on a banana shin. All the people would then take the powder and smear on their forehead as a sign of respect for the past year and also as a symbol of bidding farewell to it.

All the houses were to be clean and the ashes removed from the hearths and a fresh fire was to be made out of the fire made by Khurfuw outside his house.

In the late evening, the men would practice archery. The target must be placed on the western side of the village and all the men would try to hit the target. Whoever succeeded to hit it was to donate a jar of rice-beer as a sign of his talent in archery and the drink was enjoyed by all.

Towards the dusk, Khurfuws would take the left over charcoal powder with a shield (of rhinoceros) and a spear to the village physician with rice beer in a bamboo. Behind them, the people would pelt burning logs while others would shoo away the evil spirits which might be hiding in the house. At the village gate, the village priest would throw the bundle of charcoal with rice-beer towards the east. The following day, the gate would be closed and genna observed for the whole village and no one would go out or come in the village.

These festivals having great significance touched the every soul and life of the people and they were the legacies of their forefathers. Though they were mostly performed before the people embraced Christianity, they are still in vogue to a limited extent and in relation to the Christian belief.

### **Endnotes**

1. Singh Oinam Bhogeshor (translator), Ningthourol Lambuba, 1<sup>st</sup> Part, A Detailed History of the Kings of Manipur, Moirangkhom, 1961, pp.272-3.
2. It is one of the ancient Moyon villages which is still in existence.
3. It is one of the post of the traditional village council. The post holder is known by his post "KHURFUW". A man from Ruwen lineage of Zungven, each having 6 lineages was usually selected and was made responsible for the success of the agricultural yield. For this, he had to abstain from taking food articles such as rotten or fermented fish or meat, flesh of animal killed by tigers or poisoned arrow, fruits of creepers, etc. especially between Sachiichih and Saang-kem.
4. Such egg had to be taken from a family which was free from sickness, and including the expected mothers.
5. It is an individual festival usually performed to boost one's health. The Ikam performer fed the people singing and dancing and eating were the main items of this festival. A memorial stone was created only for such person who performed not less than four times in his life.
6. 'Saring' is a wooden pole having two branches erected only during Ikam function and killing not less than four animals. Usually three 'sarings' were erected at the first performance.

# THE FESTIVALS OF MAYON

- Dr. Donald Kosha

The Mayon traditional heritages have rituals and festival as their containers. Rituals in themselves are not festivals, but the Mayon rituals, in as much as they are characterized by eating and drinking, particularly the latter could be classified as festivals. We could therefore speak of two kinds of festival in Mayon: Ritualistic festivals and festivals. The Ritualistic festivals are Paam Rachii Isuwng, Meeruw Inrup, Shaangrii Ithee, Shaangthenpir Ihong, Mee Idim, Ber Ikaap, Khuw Inthee, and Baar Inthee. With the exception of the last one, all the above mentioned festivals are minor. The non-ritualistic festivals include Ikam, Imaar, Phamshaah, Naavuu, Een Iruwh, Inktuw, Chara Iree and Men Itu. Both classes are briefly dealt with below.

## RITUALISTIC FESTIVALS:

1. **Pam Rachii Isuwng:** Khurfhuw 'the village priest' a male from Ziingven moiety boiled an egg at *suwngkung* also called *Lamthaah* the village gate' to select the area for the year. If the egg did not boil properly the proposed area was abandoned and another one was proposed. This also as before was to be tested by boiling another egg. If the egg boiled fine, the area was cultivated. In a village where a Ziingven was not available, a Rineehti also could become khurfhuw.

**Shachii Ichee or Ruruw Inthar** 'to throw the first seed' could be done by anyone from any moiety asked to do so by the leaders in a session. This did not involve drinking or eating.

2. **Meeruw Inrup:** This ritual was also called **Kik Insuw** 'to wash the hand'. It was performed soon after seed-sowing was over. Khurfhuw washed his hands with a raw egg at **suwngkung** signifying the washing out of all evils that could plague the crops or the village.
3. **Shaangrii Ithee:** Khurfhuw would make fire with **meetuk** 'flint' at **lamthaah**. The households would light **peensiimee** 'plaited rag piece' from it and take it in the huts to ward off or cure paddy of sickness. A person or persons failing to take directly from khurfhuw's fire at **lamthaah** could take from anyone at the field. On the day of **Shaangriithe**, it was a taboo for anyone to stay in the field. In the evening the village would drink at khurfhuw's house. Such drink was generally prepared in common by contributing **vearuw** 'rice for brewery' from every household. This ritual was performed when paddy grew about half a foot.
4. **Shaangthengpir Ihong:** It was performed when paddy was ready for harvest or during harvest itself to have good crop. Four raw sticks of **rūsii** 'wild cashewnut' would be placed in a rectangular shape within which three raw of mudballs were placed, leaves of **mangkiing** and **naakii** trees were planted in between, four small sticks called **iphuw** with a piece of **siireeh** 'cast-iron' at the tips were planted at the rectangular and pieces of **siireeh** and some **zuwrae** 'rice beer without husk' packed together in **naakii** leaf had it tied to a nearby ear of a corn, which was spared in the reaping. In the evening families would drink in their respective houses. Neighbors or friends could be invited.
5. **Mee Idim:** It means 'to bury fire', performed by male elders only after harvest to ask the god of harvest to

make the harvested paddy lasting. The drinks taken at the fire-place all that was taken.

6. **Ber lkaap:** It was shooting a target **ber** with arrows to scare away all evils from the village. The time of performance was after harvest and shooting was only by males. Drinking and eating chickens of annual subscription was finished at the shooting ground.
7. **Khuw Ithee:** The performance of this ritual was to kill **khuw** 'the village' of all ills and evil spirits. On the day of performance, the village gate was closed with **shibra** leaves and branches of trees. In the evening, one or two male persons with a shibra leaf each in the hand would visit every house shouting 'go out, go all you evil spirits from the house'. One from inside the house with a stick, generally firewood in the hand would bang the floor of all the corners of the house shouting similar words and finally threw the stick out of the main door. Only male elders took the drink though it was not a taboo for the females to take. On that day, entering of the village by outsiders was taboo and the villagers could take some other route other than the main gate if they had to enter the village.

8. **Bar Inthee:** It literally means 'to suspend arum' for the departed performed generally after harvest sometime after the death when arum, yam and other similar field produces were available. On this day, the said field produces and the head of a mithun or buffalo killed for the function were hung on wooden parallel bars at the house yard near which folk performing arts were enacted. Later in the day, all these would be transferred to the tomb around which they were kept in similar manner. A human figure carved out of two kinds of trees **baarii** or **Iraang**. It would be dressed like a living person and be planted at the tomb. The sight instilled awe in any viewer. Eating and drinking and dancing were as in big festivals. It was a final adieu to the departed soul. At every meal time from the day of death some rice beer in a bamboo stem and rice, curry, chutney and all that was

prepared for the meal were kept by the hearth as food for the departed soul, who was believed to visit the family particularly at every meal time. This act would be terminated from the day of *bar inthee*.

### 1. Ikam

Ikam is the most sumptuous, the most expensive and the longest - lasting four to five days at a stretch - Mayon festival. It has eight stages, one not a part of the other; they are: Eenzuw, Marzuw, Shabae, Niing-incham, Madeed, Pham-ituk, Rashond shanglea and Aesii-iteen. A man can celebrate two stages at a time and such a celebration is called *Khungzuw-imphuwr*. Some outstanding features of the festival are the erection of big Y-shaped wooded monuments known as *SHATING*, the slaughter of a few cattle and pigs and consumption of an unspecified amount of rice and vegetables to feed the whole village and unspecified number of guests without measure. A man celebrates all the eight stages, and some did celebrate in the past. In ancient times when the richness of a person or his social status was measured by the amount of paddy he collected for the year and the number of cattle heads he reared, a man who could celebrate all the stages was deemed Meritorious and he was highly respected. The folk-performing arts of the Mayons is best exhibited in this festival because of its too expensive nature, Ikam has become practically a festival of the past.

### 2. Imaar

It is a grand celebration as a rule, an honour of parents, grandparents or parents-in-law. Rich public dinner is served, *Jutuwnng-shakam* is distributed and presentations are given. The celebration is for a day.

### 3. Phamshaah

Phamshahh also called *phamka* is a celebration to install a person, customarily a female to a rank of the village government. As in Ikam, folk performing arts are one of its



main features. To serve public meal, to distribute Jutuwnng-shakam and to give presentations are other features. The animal killed for the function may be Mithun, Buffalo or Pig. Its duration is two nights and a day.

#### **4. Naovuh**

'Making hole in the ear' also known as *Naenaovuwh* 'making hole in a child's ear' is performed generally by parents for their child or children. Long ago, the ears of the child for whom the function was held used to be pinned in reality, but now-a-days this act is quite absent though the name of the festival still has the denotation public meals and Jutuwnng-shakam feature in it also. Singing and dancing, though it is not taboo is not generally performed.

#### **5. Een Iruh**

It is an inauguration of a new house. All the village help the construction of a new house and at its completion *trek-traang*<sup>2</sup> is performed. The night is spent in qual and singing and dancing, presentation nor jutuwnng-shaam are practiced in it.

#### **6. Juktuw**

It is a betrothal. When a girl accepts the hand of a boy, the parents of the boy go to the parents of the girl with meat and drinks. If the girl's parents accept the proposal, the things that are brought are consumed, if not, they are taken back. Jutuwnng-shakam not folk performing arts are the rule in this function. In pre-Christian time, a boy and a girl lived together after juktuw as marriage of to-day's Christian times did not exist those days. Whatever may be the magnitude of juktuw, it is generally held in a subdued tone. Festive singing or dancing does not feature in it.

#### **7. Chara Iree**

It is a practice of earlier days. In it, the boy's parents go to the parents of the girl's with *ithaebuw* 'sticky rice', meat

and drinking. The function can be big or small, in whatever case, *ithaebu* is a compulsory item, while the meat may be only a cock. It has the tone of *juktuw*; singing nor dancing is done. The time of its performance is, as a rule, towards the completion of *imaah*<sup>3</sup>. It is a kind of signal for the young couple to leave the girl's house.

### Endnotes

1. *Jutuwng-shakam* in earlier days consisted of *zuw* 'drink' and cooked of *sha* 'meat'. *Zuw* used to be given in *uumbeng* 'dry gourd water carrier, which was later changed to *brien* 'bamboo stem'. In today's Christian period, tea has taken the place of *zuw*.
2. *Trektraag* is similar to the bamboo dance of the Mizos, however, in it only two persons clang two rice-pounding pertles on two other pertles.
3. *Imaah* is service rendered by a boy to his parents-in-law for three consecutive years by staying in their house immediately after coupleship.

## MAO NAGA SEED SOWING FESTIVAL

- M. Ashiho

Traditionally, people of Mao Naga live on four kinds of principal crops, namely: (i) Rice (Ottho), (ii) Oat (Osutthoo), (iii) Millet (Ushittho) and (iv) Maize (Pitthotho).

Among these four main crops, paddy is cultivated in wet terraced field; whereas the rest are cultivated on dry land (jhuming).

Seeds of these crops are sown not at any haphazard time of the month but in a particular period. There is a traditionally fixed set of seed sowing period of the months, within which period the seeds of those said crops are to be sown. Because it is believed, and actually happen that if seeds sown prior to such scheduled period then they are succumbed easily to pests attack. And is late, the result of fruit yielding is poor. As such, everybody, in a concerted effort, sows the concerned seeds in the stipulated period.

Among the seeds of the above-mentioned crops, seed of oat, as required, is sown earlier than the rest. It is sown in the middle part of the second Naga Lunar month called CHOSULOPRA (February) of the year commencing from the date 16<sup>th</sup> and culminated on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month.

For sowing seeds of paddy, the commencing date starts from the 127<sup>th</sup> of the third Naga Lunar month (TOKRULOPRA-March) extending to the middle part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Naga Lunar month namely KHIROMU (April) of the year. As regards the

varying dates of sowing paddy seed, it is virtually depending upon the climatical condition of the topography.

Millet and maize are mostly cultivated together; and its seeds are sown in the first part of the fourth Naga Lunar month "KHROMU" (April) of the year.

Regulation period of seed sowing is meticulously observed by the village Chief (MOVOOWU) and notified it timely to the general public by proclaiming the traditionally declared fixed date of communal observance of the month for heralding the approaching time of seeds sowing.

And in this respect, the first seed sowing inauguration is performed by the village Chief (MOVOOWU) on the 11<sup>th</sup> of the Second Naga Lunar month called CHOSILOPRA (February) of the year. On this day, early in the morning, the village Chief would prepare Naga rice beer freshly in a little quantity holding along with it some quantity of oat seeds are sown in a suitable place of jhum land, thereafter and thereto he offers the said Naga rice beer in a couple of make-shift cups of banana leaf by invoking the name of God for his multiple blessings.

On returning home, he similarly again offers the said rice beer by pouring and spilling over two times each and thereafter stuck the make-shift cups Made of banana leaf on to the right and left sides of his house.

On this auspicious day:

1. The village Chief takes fast. He only drinks rice beer and takes only banana as his whole day meals without taking any other sort of food stuff
2. A stranger is not permitted to enter into his house.
3. No frying nor roasting of edible materials is allowed.
4. No fire is permitted to use for burning purpose in the paddy field nor in the jungle.
5. A man and a woman physical contact are restricted generally in all kinds of such auspicious occasions.
6. If any person happens to die on this day and implies that all the Mao villages, governing, by this traditional custom, observed as non-working day.

In this way, for the interest of the general public welfare, the village Chief (MOVOOWU) takes much pains in performing those customary ritual ceremonies.

As a result of which villagers of every house holders; as required by custom, give him about one Kg of paddy as a token of gratitude shown to him.

## CHITHUNI FESTIVAL OF MAO (SEED SOWING FESTIVAL)

- R. Onia, B.A., B.T.  
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'CHITHUNI' is the biggest and most important festival among the Mao Nagas. It falls in the month of January (CHITHUTNIKHRO). It is generally celebrated for five days at a stretch commencing from the 25<sup>th</sup> day of Chithunikhro, but some villages continue up to even sixth days. However, the festive season extends upto 'Onianu', fifteen days later.

The festival can be defined in three ways according to the three significances attached to it. Firstly, since it is celebrated just after harvest it can be called "HARVESTING FESTIVAL". Secondly, as it is celebrated in the first month of a New Year it can be called 'NEW YEAR FESTIVAL'. Lastly, it can also be called the "SEED SOWING FESTIVAL" because sowing seeds starts as soon as the festival is concluded.

The activities and items of the festival are described below in order of the days of the festival.

### FIRST DAY

The first day known as "NISHA" is actually a day of preparation of the festival. Meat are prepared, breads baked and an open space is fenced off and decorated for the gatherings that would be held in the proceeding evenings. Firewood is also collected from each household and kept there

for the bonfires in the evening gatherings. It is a busy day on which we can see the villagers going about their own respective works. Rice beer, which is a special food-drink of the festival is prepared well before the festival's arrival.

## **SECOND DAY**

In the early morning of the second day, before they have eaten anything, mothers of the family initiate the festival's rituals by filling in cone-shaped cups made of banana leaves with rice beer. These cups are then perched on the roofs of houses as offerings to God. Pigs, chickens and other animals are killed on this day to serve as special food for the festival. On this day, villagers offer rice beer, deliciously cooked meat and Chatni to each other.

Towards the evening, around a big bonfire in the place already mentioned, the villagers will gather and enjoy rice-beer and meat. While they feast, some will entertain the gathering by singing folk songs, telling folk stories etc. Today dramas and other modern forms of entertainment are common sight in such evening programmes. The evening session just mentioned is carried out every evening till the end of the Festival.

## **THIRD DAY**

On "OSHU KOPE", the third day of the Festival all the males of the village young and old, married and unmarried will go to a certain part of the jungle early in the morning to catch birds with bare hands. On this occasion, every participant tries his best because it is taken as a demonstration of one's athletic prowess and skill. When enough number of birds are caught, by common consent they will end the hunt and march back in a group singing four-voiced rhythmic melodies (MOVUKOCHO) (the tunes and rhythm are greatly inspirational in effect). When they reach the village, they march on for some time and then conclude the singing in a very fast tempo. The birds are then hung on top of tall bamboo trees in front of the bachelor's dormitory. This program me is held

on a competitive basis between the married and the unmarried males of the village and the group that catches the greater number of birds will later on in the evening have the honor of collecting prepared meat from members of the unlucky group.

In the daytime, newly married couples are invited by 'the brides' families who give them well-prepared rice beer, meat, etc. called "ODU". On return to their homes, the couples will invite the husbands' relatives, friends and neighbors to bless their marriage by partaking of the "ODU" they had brought from the brides' family.

#### **FOURTH DAY**

The fourth day will see the villagers inviting others to their homes and also inviting relatives and friends. They give and receive prepared food from others for tasting.

#### **FIFTH DAY**

The fifth day is the last day of the festival for those villages who do not have the tradition of "PFOKI KATA" (Hill-climbing). Besides the programmes carried out in the previous day, the youths on this day have a special time. These girls will play the game called "KAKA-KAKA" and the boys "DZIITHE KADA". All the youths are given chances of participating in the games as it the last day for such activities and they are discontinued from the following day onwards.

#### **SIXTH DAY**

As mentioned before, some villages have the tradition of climbing a hill on the sixth day and it is for them the most enjoyable day. (Members from villages who do not observe this tradition may also join them). The villagers dress themselves in full traditional attires for the occasion. The male members will climb the hill in a group singing the four-voice melody (MOVUKOCHO) and carrying with them well-sharpened and glittering spears, daos, guns and other



weapons. On the way indigenously made "TOMSHA BOMBS" are exploded. When the hill-top is reached the boys have long jump and shot-put competitions. Some girls will dance while they sing short songs having sportingly taunting meanings to each other. Later on, the boys will arrange a bundle of firewood for each of the girls (dancers) who will carry them on their backs for use in the dormitory in the evening.

Before sunset, the group will go back to the village, the girls leading the march and the boys behind them singing the same four-voiced melody. In the evening, the boys will go to the girls dormitory and around a big bonfire, they will enjoy late into the night by having commonly prepared rice beer and meat, and singing songs of love and friendship.

ONIANii: Though the festival proper is over after the sixth day, the festive mood persists until the fifteenth day, known as 'ONIANii' which is also known as the tail of the Festival.

On this day, there is the same feasting and the enjoyable evening programme around the bonfire. People take breads on this day for their enjoyment and also to be sent as gifts to others. Generally, bread is not prepared after this occasion.

### **OMO MATI KOTHO**

On the day after the 'ONIANii' the village Chief will sow the first seeds of the year. This ceremony is known as "OMO MATI KOTHO". Killing of animals is prohibited on this day. Excepting firewood for cooking, all roasting, frying or other such kinds are also prohibited. After this, the villagers start sowing seeds of vegetables and proceed on in right earnest to the year's task and challenge.

## SEED SOWING FESTIVAL OF THE MAO TRIBE

(This Article is culled from the writings of R. Onia and M. Thohrii)

The Mao Naga Tribe has five important festivals observed in a year, namely Chithuni, Saleni, Chijini, Beluni and Onooni. Each of these festivals has its own significance with the change of seasons. Of all, Chithuni is the most important festival of the tribe. The description of this particular festival is given here below.

**Chithuni Festival:** Chithuni is the greatest festival of the Mao Nagas. This festival is observed in the month of Chithunikhro corresponding to December or January according to the English Calendar, depending on the appearance of the new moon and the reading which is made by the villages Chiefs. It is generally celebrated for five days at a stretch commencing from the 25th day of Chithunikhro, but some villages continue upto the sixth day even.

The month of Chithunikhro is a period of matrimony, inauguration of tilling soil, bringing manure to the paddy fields and plantation of fruit plants. It is also a period of music and sports. The festival can thus be described in three ways with significances attached to it. Firstly, since it is celebrated just after harvest, it can be called "HARVESTING FESTIVAL". Secondly, as it is celebrated in the first month of a New Year it can be called 'NEW YEAR FESTIVAL". Lastly, it can also

be called the "SEED SOWING FESTIVAL" because sowing seeds starts as soon as the festival is concluded.

This festival is conspicuously marked by merriments and delicacies. Both the rich and poor alike, regardless of their wealth and position, lavish on entertainments. Kaka-Kaka, Dziithe Kada, wrestling, Long-jump and Shot-put are the main items of traditional games ns sports being played during the festival. Beef, pork, chicken and rice beer are abundantly taken during this occasion. Rice beer is prepared by each family for this happy occasion on "ZHEPE", seven days before NISHA. Evening of all days of the festival are joyous as young and old gather in groups making bonfires when they all share their food and drinks. They tell stories and sing folk songs at this hour.

**FIRST DAY:** The first day known as 'NISHA' is actually a day of preparation of the Festival proper. Slaughtering of animal, baking of breads, decorating the localities and collection of firewood for making bonfires in the proceeding evening gatherings are the scenes of the day. But this day is the beginning of the festival for some villages.

**SECOND DAY:** Niji falls on this day when a section the Mao people collect food and drinks, especially rice beer as duties from those parties who do not participate in repairing the traditional roads. The food and drinks collected are then shared between the members at the evening gatherings.

**THIRD DAY:** "OSHU KOPE" is the third day of the Festival. on this day, newly married couples are invited by the brides' family. They go back to the bridegroom's residence with delicious food and drinks known as 'Odu'. This Odu is partaken with the husband's relatives, friends and neighbours who in return bless their marriage. In the morning, males of the village young and old, go to a certain part of the jungle to catch birds with bare hands. Every person tries his best to attain a niche of the fame out of this game. Competition of this game is held between the married and unmarried males of the village. The captivated birds are kept hung on the top of tall bamboos in front of the bachelors dormitory. In the evening, the group that catches more birds will go the members of the unlucky group and collect cooked meat as their honour from them.

**FOURTH DAY:** The fourth day is known as 'PRA-ALE'. On this day, the villagers invite relatives and friends to their houses. They exchange their food and drinks as token of love and friendship.

**FIFTH DAY:** 'Alelejii' is the last day of this festival for those villages who do not have the practice and tradition of 'Pfoki Koko' (hill climbing) on the next day. The youth on this day compete in traditional games such as "KAKA-KAKA" "DZIITHE KADA". The girls play Kaka-kaka and the boys play Dziithe-Kada. Everyone gets their chances in the competition as these game are forbidden when this festival comes to an end.

**SIXTH DAY:** As stated earlier, some villages have the tradition of climbing a hill on the sixth day and it is it is the most memorable day for them. The villagers dress themselves in colourful traditional attires for the occasion. As they climb the hill-top, the males chant a sonorous incantation in unison in four different voices (MOVOKOCHO). They carry with them the traditional weapons such as spears, daos, guns and other weapons. On their way they shoot their guns with gun-powder indigenously made to symbolize their happiness and to appeal courage and enthusiasm.

When the hill-top is reached, the boys have Long-jump and Shot-put competition. Some girls will dance while they sing to each other short songs. This dance (KADE) is very typical in nature.

When all the sporting moment are over, the boys will arrange an bundle of firewood for each of the girls (dancers) who will carry them on their backs for use during the entertainments at their dormitory. The climbers must return to their village before sunset as there is a traditional belief that if they return to their village after sunset, heavy death toll of men will occur that year in the village. The climbers thus return home punctually, chanting the same four voiced melody (MOVOKOCHO) and the procession is led by girls.

In the evening big bonfires are prepared at the boys' and girls' dormitories where they enjoy food and rice beer. Thereafter, young boys go to greet the girls in their

dormitories. At these places, they exchange their talent in singing and in telling stories as they drink rice beer.

Thus this festival comes to an end with lots of memories for the year.

Oniannii : Though the festival proper is over after the sixth day, the festival mood persists uptill the fifteenth day. "ONIANII" is celebrated for a day. It marks the real end of the festival.

On this day, there is the same feasting and the evening's merriments around bonfires. People bake breads on this day to be distributed to friend and relatives. Generally, bread is not prepared after onianii.

**OMO MATI KOTHO:** The next day after the 'Onianii' the village Chief will sow the first seeds of the year. This ceremony is known as "OMO MATI KOTHO". Killing of animals is prohibited on this day. Roasting, frying or other such kinds are also prohibited.

After this, the villagers start sowing seeds of vegetables and proceed on with their year's task and challenges with full earnest.

## PLANTATION FESTIVAL OF THE MAO TRIBE

- Mr. M.H. Thisho Kriina

'Saleni' is the most important festival of the Mao Tribe, next to 'chithuni'. This festival is observed in the month of salekhro and Rolikhro, corresponding to the month July, which is generally after the paddy transplantation. This festival is noted for the males. During this festival, marriage is prohibited and husbands avoid their sleep with wives.

KAPENISII KAPFII: Kapenisii Kopfii falls on the 24<sup>th</sup> of Salekhro, and on this day unmarried females and all males will dress in their best traditional attires and have competitions like long-jump, wrestling for the males and 'ONI KADE' (a typical Mao dance) and singing for the unmarried females. From this day onwards, men will not be allowed to eat dog-meat as it is the mating season for the dogs. On this day, villages like Kalinamei and Song Song go to the peak of a mountain called Pfuki as part of entertainment.

MACHA KOZII: Macha Kozii falls on the 28<sup>th</sup> of Salekhro, and on this day men will separate their kitchen from the women's. The rites of purification for the one year old boys are performed on this day. Neighbours and friends are invited for the celebration of the birth anniversary. The head of the family will sprinkle water on the boy's head blessing him to attain the qualities of being a male. He will then ask the village Chief to contribute paddy (Okutho) with which the bravery of the boy will be forecasted.

**NIJII:** Nijii falls on the 29<sup>th</sup> of Salekhro, and on this day villagers exchange their rice beer (locally brewed) as token of love and friendship. During this festival, males will eat female's food preparations only on this day and the next day. Sending of gifts to sisters by their brothers is usually made on this day. Towards the afternoon, a game called 'LERIIKA-PHI' is played by the males of the village. This game is a 'Mock War' being played with a belief that "without a war the difference of males and females cannot be identified". The weapon for this game is a long plant called "Lerii" which can be thrown like spears. This game is played till the end of the festival. Pfosemal village (Pudunamai) plays and preserves this game till this time with great enthusiasm.

**NOLUKOPE:** Nolutope falls on the 30<sup>th</sup> of Salekhro and only merry-makings are noted for this day.

**ALE KARINI:** Ale Karini falls on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Rolikhro. On this day, the males will again separate their kitchen for two days. During these two days, women are not allowed to touch the utensils of the menfolk.

**ALE KONONI:** Ale Kononi falls on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Rolikhro. On this day and the former day, women are not allowed to fetch water unless all men have fetched their water. No outside village guests are entertained on these two days.

With Ale Kononi the merriments of this festival comes to an end. The utensils used for this festival are kept hung on the roof of the house till the next year.

## THE SEED-SOWING FESTIVAL OF THE MARAMS

- Th. Thumba Marams

Classified as a 'Primitive Tribe' by the Government of India, the Maram Tribe is one of the 29 scheduled tribes of Manipur, based mainly in the Senapati District of Manipur along the Koubru Range, Sadim Hills, Maram Hills and Willong Range. As per the statistical report, the Maram population stands at about 15,435 people. Some Maram villages are also located in the districts of Tamenglong and Ukhrul and in Nagaland state.

The Marams are generally fair complexioned and short statured but active. Agriculture is their main occupation, 60 p.c. of the Maram land is forest, covered with green vegetation. Jhuming as well as wet field cultivation is practiced. The river Barak runs through their area and is the main course of water sources for cultivation. Of the total population, about 7695 have embraced Christianity, while the others continued to practice their ancient beliefs. They worshipped different gods, chief among them being Sting Gonba, Shadzii Gongba, King of Heaven and Earth, sarah Kachingna, Sarah Mpoyna and Pow Momba are smaller gods.

The Maram village administration is democratic in character though Chief ship is hereditary. However, the overall administration of the village lies in the hands of the village council.



Luikai Tingnei or the Seed Sowing Festival takes place in the third month of the year. As per the tradition the village Chief decides the time and date. He has to inform the Tingba (Priest) to declare the observance of the Luikai Tingnei. All villagers are to observe the festival once it is declared by the Tingba.

The felling of trees for firewood and for construction of new houses has a specific period and occurs in the first and second months of the year. During Koipohkii (felling month) trees are cut for firewood and stocked in the respective houses. Any family failing to collect firewood and stocking them in their premises are mocked by the people and are not appreciated. After the felling of trees for firewood, the period for construction of new houses begins. The construction of houses also has a specific period; once that period is passed, no one is allowed to construct new houses in that year. Then the Seed Sowing Festival "Luikai Tingnei" sets in.

On the eve of Luikai Tingnei, the Maram people observed "Kalira" or "Lalirasa". A priestess "Matapwi" is chosen by the village Chief for ceremonial purposes. A temporary tent is erected. The Matawi is to confine herself in solitary inside the tent for 5(five) days. Her body is searched and checked before she enters the tent. Inside the tent she is too fast for 5 (five) days. She is allowed a small quantity of pasty rice (soft boiled rice) which she had to prepare herself in her tent. She is forbidden to take chilly or salt. She is also allowed to built herself a small fire to keep herself warm. Thus, she observed the "Gina" (sacred festival) of seed sowing festival. After the 5<sup>th</sup> day, the Matapwi completes her fast, goes out beyond the village gate, and tills a small portion of earth, chanting words of blessing that the year should be plentiful and a prosperous one.

In return for her great sacrifice she had undertaken, the villagers had to offer the Matawi paddy, collected from each and every household. And during the Pongi festival, she is also given the privilege by the village council to collect meat she so desires but not on the Quantity.

The month of March is known as Lungrowkei or Betikkii. During this period, every elderly people has to wash their

hands on a certain appointed day declared by the village Chief. This is a sign of purification. On the first day, used leaves are thrown away as a sign of the departure of all unclean things. In the evening all the males of village gather at the premises of the village Chief and their Gods. This is known as Magu Keile.

Then comes the Sabangha (untouchability) of old skulls of beasts and animals. This is mainly observed by the owners of dormitories and the skulls of animals, which kept in their houses which has fallen down are restricted to be hung up again.

After this the people observed Nganglelu. This is the preparation day of the festival. Things for the festival are arranged strangers or visitors who would not be able to stay upto the end of the festival are sent back home.

Tuimalitt is untouchability day. No visitor or guest is allowed into the festival. Branches of green leave are hung at every gate as a sign of restrictions for entering the village. It is a belief that legs of the outsiders or guest may break in accident in case they enter the village.

The diets of all the household heads are restricted. No food is served to them except for the traditional rice beer. It is taboo to drop cooked food on the fire. Rice beer is prohibited for all others. In case a drop of rice beer falls on the fire, it is feared that the crops would be affected. The village Chief is not allowed to touch the ground but he had to walk only on planks whenever he moves till the end of the festival.

After Tuimpat Tingnei untouchability is ignored, people are allowed to mix and eat freely. Then comes the sowing of seeds known as tuikei tingnei. On the first day Byii luikei (Jam seeds) is observed by the Chief or the Priest and on the third day the public is allowed to sow their seeds.

On completion of the sowing of seeds, social life certain restrictions are imposed on the Maram people.

1. Blowing of trumpet is strictly prohibited.
2. Playing of flute, pena and nking is not allowed.
3. Playing of dice (likkon) is also stopped.

# RITUALS OF POUMAI NAGA FOR AUSPICIOUS SEED SOWING AND FRUITFUL HARVEST

- The Poumai Naga Union

## **Tale of the Original Seed**

In the beginning, man possessed the paddy seed. He hid it in a basket and kept it in the house. One day the rat stole the seed after gnawing off the basket. The cat saw and chased the rat and seized the seed. The dog also saw it and chased after the cat. But the cat dropped the seed into the river. There was a dormitory of Khochi, also known as 'Khochi Loumai', where seven maidens use to sleep together. The seven girls use to bath in this particular river. One day while bathing, they saw and picked up the seed; which was lying on the river bed. The dog saw them picking the seed and wanted to possess it. It came up with a plan and took the clothing of the girls to bargain for the seed. The girls were hopeless and were forced to part with the seed. The dog had to cross a river lest man hunt him down for the seed. He asked the help of a monkey. The monkey also bargained for the seed, to which the dog also agreed for fear of being hunted down. The monkey put the seed in the sac for storing food below the jaw sac. The monkey was embarrassed and shamed

at the gesture of man and spit out the paddy seed on the ground. Man was quick to pick it up to finally possess the paddy seed. Before the discovery of paddy, man used to cultivate a kind of weed known as 'Khah' in Poumai dialect which has a tasteless seed.

(Courtesy of the story by D. Thohrii of Khumai/Tungam village)

Let us see here a brief of the rituals & genna observed by the Poumai Nagas in the course of the 12 (twelve) lunar months one by one, characterized by the cycle of Agriculture.

#### THE TWELVE LUNAR MONTHS ARE:

- |            |                      |
|------------|----------------------|
| 1. Thounii | (Falls in December)  |
| 2. Sii Pya | (Falls in January)   |
| 3. Rou Pya | (Falls in February)  |
| 4. Khyonii | (Falls in March)     |
| 5. Khyana  | (Falls in April)     |
| 6. Mouzii  | (Falls in May)       |
| 7. Lao     | (Falls in June)      |
| 8. Lai     | (Falls in July)      |
| 9. Neh     | (Falls in August)    |
| 10. Yupfo  | (Falls in September) |
| 11. Chadu  | (Falls in October)   |
| 12. Donii  | (Falls in November)  |

### 1. Thonii (December)

Thonii is also the name of the festival celebrated during this month and continued for 5 (five) days. The first day known as 'SHA'. All families will bake bread made of rice flour. On the second day an important religious rite known as 'CHIJII' is performed. This rite performed by either the father or the mother of the house. A sort of cup made out of plantain leaves known as 'Lee' is used. The performer will hold the 'Lee' filled with rice beer and shake out the beer as an act of offering to God. The empty 'Lee' will be hung on

the main pillar of the house till it wears out. This rite is performed early in the morning.

On this day also falls the occasion of 'Jo-Shu' (Jo' literally means a packet and 'Shu' means opening). This occasion marks the offering of a feast by the bride side of a newly married couple to the fraternal kinship of the bridegroom. Traditionally the feast consists of rice beer and meat, which may be given by the bride side readymade or in others they provide in the form of paddy and rice beer is prepared in the house of the bridegroom.

In the evening, another religious ride known as 'Hrali Kho-kho' is performed by the mother of the house. This is basically an offering of rice and meat to God head. 0 (thirty) plates and (twenty) plates offered to fatherhood of God and motherhood of God respectively. The remaining is distributed to all the members of the family who eats it after ceremonially touching their forehead and chest.

The third day is called 'Shpao-ne, 'She' literally means guests from the villages. On this day these guests are treated to the eating and drinking of the festival.

## **2. Sii Pay (January)**

There are some traditional games and sports and musical instruments which are seasonal. On the first day of the month, a formal prohibition to play or use such games and instruments is proclaimed. Examples of these are 'CHII'(Top), 'Yaolo' (A female game like Meitei kang)' Hakai' (Trumpet of buffalo horn), etc.

On the third day, 'RACXHII-SOU' is observed. This day marks the construction of the House of God. The construction is led by the traditional village Chief with members of a priestly clan. The construction is done with fastings and prayers.

On the fourth day purification of the village Chief is observed with fasting and is known as 'Ve-Lao'.

The fifth day is observed as the seed sowing day of the village Chief.

The sixth day is observed as the seed sowing day for the general public of the village done on its behalf by an ordained clan. Burning of forests, roasting of animals and meat are prohibited during these days of observation for seed sowing.

### **3. Rou Pya (February)**

It is the month for seed sowing of paddy.

On the eleventh day, a special 'Genna' or prohibition from going to work is observed and prayers made to God for protection from the wrath of hail storm.

The fourteenth day is observed as the paddy seed sowing day of the King followed by the same seed sowing day of the general public, on the fifteenth day symbolically represented by one man.

The eighteenth day is observed as a mark of recognition to the persons who have performed the merit feats 'Zosho' 'Mozii' in the same year, by marking the day as a seed sowing day for them.

### **4. Mazii (May)**

On the penultimate day, the festival called 'DOONII' is celebrated. On this day, the religious rituals (as described above in Thounii) of 'Chijii' and 'Hrali Kho-Kho' are also performed. These rites are performed specially praying to God for abundant rain in the coming year. If there is rain on this day, it is taken as an omen that there will be sufficient rain, if not it is generally understood that there will be drought. In the event of rain not coming in time, 'Doonii' is observed again to pray for rain.

### **5. Lao-Nii (June)**

Laonii is one of the major festivals celebrated by the Poumai Nagas. It falls either on the 2nd or 3rd week of the month.

The preparations for the feast starts with 'Paonii-sii-pfe' which means gathering of a kind of firewood known as

'Paonii-Sii'. On this day bamboo plates and wooden spoons and new stones to raise a new hearth will be prepared. All these articles will be used during the festival especially for the 'HAZII' ceremony on the following day.

'CHAZII' may be said to be an equivalent in spirit of the ceremony of circumcision of the Israelites. This ceremony is meant for consecration of the malehood. It is performed for boys in their early childhood and for those who have performed the merit feasts of 'Zosho' and 'Mozii'. It is observed by killing a blameless cock and eating it, cooked by someone eating as a Godfather.

The rituals of 'Chijii' and 'Hali Kho-Kho' are also performed in this festival which brings out the prominent place of these religious rites in the life and observation of the Poumai Nagas.

## **6. Neenii (August):**

During the observations during this month, the stress is on prayer to God for protection to the standing crop.

The first day is observed as 'To-Koh' Genna, which literally means asking God for sufficient food.

The fourth day is observed as "Tei-dei-tho' which literally means paying obeisance to Heaven and Earth.

During the month, a blameless cock is killed and predictions are made for the coming year. If the excreta of the cock is solid and stable, it is supposed to signify a good harvest. But if it is fluid, the harvest is lean.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> day, the Chief will symbolically perform harvest and eat of its first fruits. On the following day, the general public will do the same.

The 28<sup>th</sup> day is the main festival day called 'Neenii'. On this day, two observations are made.

First 'Hepao' a male dog reared by the Chief will be killed and pieces of it will be distributed to all households of the village.

Secondly, 'Vei-Be' in which a blameless calf will be bound with a particular kind of a jungle creeper called 'Khurai' on a post of a special tree called 'Veisii'. If the calf is quite and content, it is taken to predict that there will be no thunder and hailstorm to destroy the crops. But if the calf moans and groans, it is generally taken to be a bad omen, and the direction to which the calf is facing while moaning signifies the areas vulnerable to such natural calamities. During the period starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month till the proclamation of 'Vei-Pya' acts like traditional hauling cutting of trees, burning jungles, etc. are prohibited.

Veipya is the proclamation that such prohibitions are lifted and that certain traditional games and musical instruments which are also prohibited earlier are allowed to be used.

(Note: Due to the absence of any officially standardized version of the observations by any representative organizations of the Poumais including the parent body 'The Poumai Naga Union' the version is that as prevalent in Siimai (Saranamai village).



# 16

## THE TARAO & THE SEED SOWING FESTIVAL

- M. Bejuan Tarao

It is the belief of the Tarao people that they came out of a sub-terrenian world (cave). A man from the Katrimsha clan was the first to venture out of the cave to explore a better place for settlement. However, it is believed that the Katrimsha man was killed and eaten by a tiger, guarding the entrance of the cave.

A second man called Kholou was sent to investigate about the fate of the Katrimsha man. As kholou came out of the cave, he saw the tiger guarding the mouth of the cave. Kholou broke a branch of a markheeng tree, with the shape of a horn and charged at the tiger saying, "Let us see who wins, I with my horn like Markheeng branch or you with your sharp teeth". In a fierce battle that ensued kholou managed to kill the tiger. He then called out to his people and led them out of their sub-terrenian world.

For his bravery and courageous deed of his victory over the tiger, the people gave him the title of khulpu, meaning Master of the sub-terranian world.

The main clan of the Tarao people are khulpuen Tlangsha, Mathangmanei Rapdou, Khullan. Ciranna, Lunglan, Katrimsha and Saloisanei. The Taraos usually specific significant while choosing a place for settlement. The significant are a cock, drum, cat and lungtat (Stone used for sharpening knives).

- a) Cock - If the cock crows while choosing a place for settlement, then it is regarded as an ideal one to settle down.
- b) Drum - If the drum produces a certain sound while choosing a place, it is then considered a place of dead, sorrow and pain. The Taraos will not settle at such place.
- c) Cat - If the cat mews while a place of settlement is being chosen, then that place is considered to be a place of fierce animals.
- d) Lungtat - If the lungtat produces the sound of knife rubbing then it is considered to be a place of extreme heat.

So accordingly, the Taraos settle down at place called Houbishing (which now lies to the north-west of Burma known as Angoching). To commemorate their victory over the enemy. The Taraos held a grand feast. The joy and happiness of this event gave them the nomenclature of the word "Tarao" meaning 'HAPPY PEOPLE'. Khulpu then, told his people to erect Markhung Kung (post made of Markheeng tree) in front of their houses. Because with the markheeng branch they have become victorious over their enemy. Gradually, the markheeng branch not only become a memorial of their victory but also become a symbol and a means to ward off or prevent the evil spirit, diseases and other misfortunes, that may be seized by the village. This symbol can still be seen even today at the entrance of the houses of those Tarao families who have embraced the Christian faith. In the early days the Taraos used to celebrate the seed - sowing festival in the month of March. In fact, there are also many other festivals in the months of December, January and February all relating to the seed sowing festival. They are Markhung Kung maaring, Palkhar Kakla kaa, Kuntle, Khung Marum. These festivals are mainly for the purpose of jhum cultivation generally, a special discussion is held by the villagers to decide and choose the site of jhum field, which they intend to cultivate in that particular year. A ritual is performed so that no misfortunes fall to the tools and other implements used in the jhumming and to prevent the evil spirits

and diseases during the time of clearing and setting on fire the jhum fields. During these rituals the people also learnt the art of beating drums archery, dance & songs is also performed by the Taraos.

Martang (March) is the time for the sowing of new seeds. All the villagers gather at the jhum field of tieilap and a ritual ceremony is performed by the village headman. The villagers brought along with them a dog, a pot of rice beer and a box containing tiny images of nine cows and ox made of clay. Other essential incidents were also brought. The dog is pulled by the Changroi (server appointed by the village council). Tieilap carries his own seeds for sowing. If the headman is not in a position to walk to the field, he is carried in a palanquin by the villagers. When the headman reaches the spot, chosen by the villagers he erects a post made of markheeng tree and the box is place at its foot.

The next process is the killing of the dog, that has been brought. For this a special wooden hammer known as Aishung has been made and given to the headman. The headman gently pats the dog and then hands it over to the Changroi, who at the headman's command kills the dog with the Aishung. The Changroi then cuts the important part of the animal the four limbs, ears, tongue intestines/lungs and hands it over to the headman. The remaining portion of the animals is distributed to all the household in the village.

Then the headman made offering of the important pieces of meat at the place of the ritual ceremony. This is known as Chana Aithlaak. Next, he chants a prayer in order to prevent danger, diseases and misfortunes and also to ward off evil spirits. This is known as Rampok. When the ritual is over, the headman sows a handful of paddy seeds in three small places, each measuring about 10 feet square quantity of the seed. The first phaitom is known Kunchil, the second Kumhai and the third Kummei. In case the seed sowed in these small areas is found to be sufficient, it is the belief of the Taraos that the produce of the paddy will be sufficient and vice-versa. After all these are over, the Tietlap will plant his seed in his field. Only then the other villagers are allowed to sow their seeds in their respective jhum fields.

After the sowing of seeds is over, the villagers leave for the village. Before entering the village gate known as Palkung, the headman takes some rice beer from the people, who had come to welcome them at the Palkung and sprinkles the rice-beer at the village gate in order to chase away the evil spirits that may have been following them, by doing this they believed that evil things will not occur in the village.

Then they performed another ritual known as Kumshir, Children below the age of six years are strictly prohibited to wear Manpiri flower on their ears. They may do so only after performing the kumshir ceremony. The elders sport Jingpai flowers on their ears and start singing and dancing. A man from the Katrimsha clan will beat the drum, while a man from the Tlangsha clan will play the violin. Another man belonging to the chana clan will beat the horn of an animal with a stick. This kumshir festival is the seed growing festival of the Taraos.

## TANGKHUL (WUNG) NAGA FESTIVALS

- L. Ragui.

In time past the present called 'TANGKHUL Naga was known as 'WUNG NAGA'. This may be justified by considering many of the penned down and most of the traditional history folksongs and folktales. The switching of the nomenclature of Wung Naga to Tangkhul Naga by whom, why, how and when is still obscure. Yet we are now called Tangkul Naga as is officially called.

The Tangkhul Naga inhabits the whole of North-East of Manipur State. Tradition holds that the Tangkhuls were firstly concentrated in one particular religion in the eastern part of Manipur. However, the increase in population compelled them to scatter gradually to the north, east, south and west of the Past. In course of time difference in language in respect of accent, pronunciation-etc., mode of living and festivals took place gradually. Slight difference in the style of the festivals is evident yet they are observed at the same season with basically the same motive. The nature and significance of the festivals - invocation and glorification to the deities followed by community feast - are a common feature. Apart from their love for the festivals the Tangkhul Nagas are very much concerned of their socio-political and cultural environment. In order to be well aware of all these facts the Tangkhuls, both young and old, men and women assembled in their respective dormitories where elders pass on the facts and nature of their essence to the younger generation. It is only

here in the dormitories that the youth are taught the morals and behaviors of a good citizenship, the art of dancing and singing and the characteristics of their varied and cherished festivals.

The various Tangkhul Naga traditional festivals are:

|                                  |   |         |   |          |
|----------------------------------|---|---------|---|----------|
| 1. Luira<br>(Marun)              | - | 12 days | - | February |
| 2. Manei<br>(Khaying)            | - | 2 days  | - | April    |
| 3. Yara<br>(Khaying)             | - | 4 days  | - | April    |
| 4. Lui shomkhamashar<br>(Kharam) | - | 1 day   | - | May      |
| 5. Mangkhap<br>(Marang)          | - | 4 days  | - | July     |
| 6. Mawonzai                      |   |         |   |          |
| (a) Zaira<br>(Phei)              | - | 1 day   | - | August   |
| (b) Zaira<br>(Tatharaha)         | - | 2 days  | - | October  |
| 7. Chumpha<br>(Ngaphei)          | - | 2 days  | - | November |
| 8. Longra<br>(Khayon)            | - | 4 days  | - | December |
| 9. Thisham<br>(Tharao)           | - | 4 days  | - | January  |

## 1. Luira

Luira Festival is observed in the month of February. It is the first and the biggest festival of a Calendar Year. It is a festival to commemorate the first seed sowing of crops, fruits, and vegetables of a year and is celebrated with dancing, singing and feasting in their best colorful costumes. Tradition calls that the chief of the community begins sowing all the necessary, seeds so that the populace may start their works of cultivation. No man sow a seed before the chief began for fear of bad harvest. It is considered taboo to violate this

traditional law. If any one does otherwise it is believed that the crop production of the year would be very low. Hence Luira festival is given great importance with pageantry of colours. This festival is observed for 12 days. From the first to the third day travelers and traders are not enter the village for fear they may bring in evil spirit and bad luck. This taboo is known as 'KHASIT'.

In order to indicate this taboo of entering certain villagers the villagers set ablaze the jhums which had been cut down during November and December and January. This burning of jhums is known as 'Meisin'. The flame and smoke of the Meisin let the adjacent villages aware of the taboo of Luira festival. Within these three days of khasit the villagers gather fire woods and a resinous illuminant wood, Flambeaux, (Meira) obtained from pine tree to be used in the festival. On the fourth day cattles and pigs were slaughtered to mark the real beginning of the festival. On this day the youth gather vines (a large and rare species of crippler found in deep woods of the Tangkhuls, used as rope for tug-of-war by the natives) from the jungle. Each locality is to bring one long enough vine each. Once the taboo of khasit is declared man of the same village is also affected provided he may enter the village after one night rest in the jungle. However, once the animals are killed they should not enter the village till 'LANGPEI LANGWOR' i.e. the 10th day.

On the fifth day the chief invokes the Deities for excellent harvest by sacrificing domestic animals followed by having feast. This day is known as 'AWUNGSHI KHARUK'. On this day they clean the house, compounds and utensils. When this done the public followed the same procedure on the sixth day which is known as 'YARUI KHARUK'.

After these ritual immolation festive activities such as rice beer drinking and eating among friends, relatives and neighbors begin. It is from this day that the true pageantry of colour is focused by initiating the following games and sports:

- (a) La Khanganui (Beauty Contest)
- (b) Thingreira Khangakhun (Tug-of-war)
- (c) Khangatuk (Wrestling)

(d) Zeipa Khangaphar (Javelin Throw)

(e) Raichak Kasa (War Dance)

**a. La Khanganui (Beauty Contest):**

One of the most outstanding features of Lura Phanit is the La Khanganui where only virgin women are eligible. On this special occasion women of different age group, after a good bath, apply lard to the body in lieu of the present so-called body lotion. Then they are adorned with bangles made of rare specific wood. A set of beads (kongsang) similar to ruby and emerald are arranged immaculately on the head and also set to cover the breast. To bring the adornment to perfection one set of goal-like ear ring is worn dangling the ends just by the ankle. Thus becomingly dressed they enter the field to dance to the tune of the music. Bachelors, on the other hand, gather group by group to witness and judge the most perfect women of all.

The true significance of the festival is to invoke the goddess of wealth for excellent harvest.

**b. Thingreira Khangakhun (Tug-of-war) :**

The vines gathered within the three days of 'Khasit' is pulled colony wise. The victorious colony retained the vine. Each colony tried their best to win the war in order to retain the vine. If the vine of one colony is retained by a neighboring colony it is considered very much disgraceful. Hence, women with babies strapped on their back and even the aged ones joined the pulling in order to enshrine the stand of the colony.

**c. Khangatuk (Wrestling):**

No Goal, Silver, or Bronze is awarded to the winners of Tangkhul wrestling. It is only a gradation of strength of the youth and to enshrine the stand of the colony. Even the losers congratulate the winners in good spirit. Not hard feeling has been recorded since of yore.

**d. Zeipa Khangahar (Javelin Throw) :**

This game is also a gradation of strength of the youth. Signification of one's colony is the appetite of each and every individual. Hence, only the salubrious, robust and vigorous youth are let to participate in the game.



**e. Raichak Kasa (War Dance) :**

As mentioned in the prefatory line the art of martial dancing is taught to the youth by the elders. The dancers are well adorned with 'KUIKALOP', a peculiar head gear decorated with human hair (Hair cut after jugulating enemy's head during head hunting). Armed with well-whetted and oiled spear and a hard buffalo skin shield they danced in the open field with swiftness and impeccable stepping.

**2. MANEI PHANIT  
(Festival of Tools and equipments) :**

Manei Phanit is observed in the month of April for two days. It is a festival similar to the Vishakarma of the Hindus. On this day hunting weapons and agricultural implements are oiled with lard after a good whetting and tied them on a husking-fan (Yangkok). While tedding the elders immolate with wine and meat to deities to give more games, better progress in cultivation and to prevent from fragility. Apart from this formality a handful of sesame is pound in a mortar to make a small flute cake which is hung on both side of the door wrapped with a particular leaf called 'KHANANGNA'. This is done to prevent epidemic of animals affecting the family. It may be noted that a traditional musical instrument (Tingteila) near akin to violin is played only from this festival till the transplantation season whence flute took over. When flute playing is begun, it is taboo to play Tingteila again.

**3. YARA PHANIT (Youth festival)**

Yara comes off in April, springtime when the World is adorned with colourful flowers and fresh leaves. It is the month of merry making, jubilation and tra-la-la for the youth of Tangkhul Naga. Religious formalities are of little importance in this festival.

**4. LUI SHOMKHAMASHAR  
(Transplantation Formalities)**

The formalities of transplantation are observed in the month of May with traditional transcendence/paragonism.

A day is fixed by the chief of the village to begin the transplantation of paddy. On this day the village chief would go to the paddy field with a chicken for immolation while the public stays at home. The chicken is cut and a little portions from different parts of the viscera (amathar) is offered to the gods along with rice beer and wine. Only thus the populace may start transplanting their paddy seedlings from the next day. Once the formality of immolation is done the playing of Tingteila, an instrument mentioned in Manei Phanit, is considered taboo. It is from this day that the tune of flute is begun.

### **5. MANGKHAP PHANIT (Festival of Completion of Cultivation)**

Ploughing, seedling and transplantation is over. The villagers have toiled as tough as leather and as uncomplaining as lamb for the past months. It will be very unjust if they are not entitled a good rest at least for a while. Thus Mangkhap Phanit is a festival of rest after the completion of cultivation. In this festival heavy feast is arranged to replenish the lost energy. Moreover, immolation is done with sacrosanctity. Chicken is cut and boiled without salt and spices. The soup of the chicken is again used to cook the rice for sacrificial purposes. When the dish is prepared they took them to the fields to perform the ritual formalities. Feathers of the killed chicken and a specific type of leaf (khanangna) are planted to give the immolation to perfection. These formalities are done to invoke the deities for protection of the crops from inundation, storm and other natural calamities and also for fecundity.

### **6. MAWONZAI (Prayer for Bumper Crops)**

The festival of Mawonzai is observed twice in year. The first invocation is done in the month of August for millet, rye, oates, etc. (Tangkhul Nagas consider these cereal grains as secondary for paddy is their only cash crop). The second one is observed with greater importance in the month of

October especially for bumper paddy crops. It is from this day that playing of flute is considered taboo.

## **7. CHUMPHA** **(Festival of thanks giving and utilizing granary)**

Products of a year are utilized till a special immolation of thanks giving to the deities of wealth is observed in Tangkhul community. This practice falls in the month of November. This immolation is done by women only, sacrificing fish, meat and mine, at night. On this day men never sleep at home. They packed their packages of war and hunting equipments and spent the night in the jungle from this festival that the melodious tune of bugle is heard.

## **8. LONGRA** **(A festival of re-union in the Dormitory)**

Nine days after Chumpha festival a grand festival of re-union in the respective Dormitories is observed in the month of December for four days. It is a Stag-festival.

A compulsory tax in kind - Egg, Dry fish, Crab, Fowls, etc. is imposed to the young members of the dormitory by the elders. It may be mentioned that gerontocracy is highly regarded among the Tangkhuls. Those who failed to bring the prescribed articles were severally punished. One notable customary law of Tangkhul Naga is that within the middle two days of Lungra festival stealing of eggs and firewood if given free hand to the member of the dormitory, provided they may be scolded or lashed if caught in action. However, no case of any sort may be filed against them.

It is a festival of extreme mirth focused by dancing and singing with special and breath taking head gear and colourful customs. Each dancer hold dove tail stick (Khaipak Thing) instead of daos.

### **9. THISAM PHANIT (Festival of the souls of dead)**

Thisam festival is observed for twelve days in the month of January. A strong belief holds that souls of the dead does not forth with leave the world for Hades till a special farewell is bade. Within this period of their death and farewell day the souls are believed to join the family at every meal. Hence, a share of the food is always served for the soul, which may be connected after the meal time and give to the children. It is considered taboo for elders to taste any part of it.

One outstanding feature of Thisham Phanit is the 'THISHAM MAHON', a special dance performed by only the rich families for it involved heavy expenditure. Buffaloes are killed and distributed to each and every household of the community and a special dance is presented by only the in-laws. All the dancers have their particular parts to play and each dancer is given a particular name- Honkhok, Honyo, Honreo, Meihai, Mipuk, etc. They dance with ardency and swiftness round an effigy of the dead.

One person, very much living, is chosen among the family to personate the dead one for it is a little informal to bade good-bye to someone not present. The chosen one who represents the dead body is required to perform certain customary duties and the bereaved family showered him with their love and affection taking him for the real loved one who died a few months ago. This personation of the dead one is called 'THILA KAPHUNGA'. He would dance his last dance in the open field of the village for he is leaving the world, our world forever and ever and is Hades ward bound. The family would follow him wailing and crying while he dance.

Feast of the dead ones is performed in the open field by bringing meat, wine and glutinous rice by all the families whose ones died in that year. The food is prepared only for the dead ones and is taboo for the living to taste even a morsel of it.

When all these formalities are performed the souls of the dead were seen off which is known as 'KAZEI KATA' meaning 'DOWN TO HADES'. This is done on the last day, the twelfth

day, of the festival. Well fed and well dresses, all the Thila Kaphung, representing the dead, would go down to a particular place 'ZEIPHAR', a little way down the village. in group. They would carry with them pine wood flambeaus, (meira) to light the journey. Reaching Zeiphah they make a bonfire with all the pine wood torches and come back home. The Tangkhul believed that the souls that have been sent off would proceed in group holding their respective torches towards that place. It has been said that people who watch late at night towards Zeiphah saw the procession of the group eastward bound, with twinkling and glittering of the flambeaus.

Since the emergence of Christianity in the first part of 1896 the importance of all traditional practice has been gradually affected. No Christians were allowed to initiate the immolation formalities and the like. Only the few Pagans observed such festivals. However, some very important festivals like Luira, Yara and Mangkhap are still observed by the Christian Tangkhuls with the same basic motive but very much unlike the ones of yore.

## TANGKHUL FESTIVALS AT A GLANCE

- Y.K. Shimray

The Tangkhuls, one of the Naga Tribes, inhabiting in the entire region of eastern Manipur, have a number of festivals through the year. Being agriculturists, their cultural life and festivalities are reflected to and reckoned by the season of cultivation in keeping with their religious ceremonies.

It will not be possible to go into detail of all the activities of all the festivals. I am, therefore, mentioning only the particular events exclusive to each festive

### **Luirā (New Year Festival)**

The celebration of LUIRA marks the beginning of Sowing of Seeds. It comes off in the month of MARTIN (middle of February), which is their New Year.

When all social activities, such as Building Houses, Celebration of MARAN (Merit Feast): SUMKOK KHANGKASANG (Installation of SUMKOK); Erection of ONRA (Cenotaph); etc. had been done, the village Headman, according to their lunar month, announces the time for the celebration of LUIRA.

Three consecutive days, called KHASIT prior to LUIRA is enforced to screen out undesirable elements, with security point of view and health precaution. No visitor is permitted to enter into the village, neither villagers are allowed to leave

the village. This restriction (KHASIT) is made known to all the people by burning around the fields and gardens. The village gate is locked and flagged with branches and twigs over the gate. Seeing the smoke from a distance, other villagers do understand that the village is going to celebrate LUIRA and that nobody could go to that village until KHASHO.

This was followed by killing animals for used during the festival. On this day i.e. the next day after KHASIT the village Headman and his wife alone go to their cultivation, make sacrifices and then sow a few seeds that have been spilled with the sacrificial blood. This is the Declaration of the Beginning of Sowing of Seeds of the year. This they call AWUNGASHI KHARUK.

AWUNGASHI KHARUK is followed by SHANGREI KHARUK on the next day. The villagers go to their fields and start sowing after offering sacrifices to their god or goddess of wealth, whom they call PHUNGHUI PHILAVA.

Then comes the usual festivities. War Dance; Javelin-throw; high jump; hockey; race; etc. are common features. Most interesting highlights are (1) Thingreira Khangakhun (2) Lakhanganui.

### **Thingreira Khangakhun**

Thingreira Khangakhun (Tug-of-war) is a peculiar game displayed during LUIRA. In this game all the villagers, men and women, young and old, boys and girls of all ages would join. To get the chance of touching the rope is believed a blessing. They call it SEIJANGKHAMEI-KHAMAYUT (prayer for bountiful harvest). People who had gone out to some other villages would certainly join this THINGREIRA KHANGAKHUN. Babies are carried on their mothers' back and made them touch the rope.

When the whole village, men and women, young and old, have all come to participate in this game, they hold the rope and sing a song, the meaning of which is - RING OUT THE OLD RING IN THE NEW WITH ALL BLESSING AND BOUNTIFUL HARVEST. As they sing, they hold the rope moving to and fro softly with all cheerfulness.

At the end of their song, the elderly persons and children retreat leaving the young folks to contest. Traditionally, during LUIRA, Tug-of-war is a mixed game, opened to inter-colony or leikai. The winner will possess the rope which will be dividing among the whole colony or leikai on the last day of the festival. Each house is given a piece of it as a token of GOOD LUCK and PROSPERITY.

### **Lakhanganui**

LAKHANGANUI literally means VIRGINS' DANCE. The dance is open only to virgins. Hence the name.

All the virgins in the village shall join the dance in traditional costumes Phangyai kashan (fully embroidered red and white skirt), a pair of brass bangles (one on each hand); one set of Kongsang over her head, dangling the ends over the ears. The dancers in a circular motion turning their backs on the spectators. They sing as they dance, striking their bangles to the beat of their music.

If a virgin refused to join the dance, her character is questionable and suspected. She is treated no longer a virgin, and a fine of one pig is imposed on her without further investigation. On the other hand, if one, who had lost her virginity joins the dance for fear of punishment, or to hide away her immorality; it is believed that some insect or any other creature will cross past her while dancing. Such an unfaithful girl is also fined according to their customary law. If she denied, physical test will be performed by the Village Council. If proved, her fine will be doubled. Thus, Virgin Dance is a Secret Declaration of VIRGINITY.

Since the virgins dance half naked, it is the best time for the young folk to adjust the most beautiful girl of the village. In some way or other, the young men name the Most Beautiful Girl, who will be honoured by making her the Hostess in the ensuing feast, called YARRA (YOUTH FESTIVAL), which would follow within the next two months.

### **Virgin Dance is also a Beauty Contest**

In big villages where there are number of virgins, leikai-wise; and so forth. Each group will select its on Beauty Queen.



The selected Beauty is honoured by making her the Hostess during the YARRA. It is a big honour likened unto the Crowning of a Beauty Queen of the world.

It sounds incredible, but Beauty Contest had been in practice among the Tangkhuls from time immemorial. But LAKHANGANUI is much more than a Beauty Contest, a Secret Declaration of Virginity too.

Lakhanganui is one of the highest codes of conduct of the Tangkhul, especially of women. In olden days, Tangkhul women were purest of all.

### **Yarra**

YARRA (Youth Festival) is a village festival; but mainly meant for the Young Folks. Hence the name. Being the festival for the Young Folks, the time is set sometime in the month of KHAYANG (April-May) when the forest is all green and flowers in splendor; a time people enjoy the grandeur of the hills.

At such a time, the Young Folks organize grand feast in the house of their respective Beauty Queen selected during the last LUIRA Festival.

On the eve of the feast, the young men go a-hunting, and girls, led by two or three boys who are exempted from hunting go a-fishing. All the killed and the catch are brought in to make a grand feast. They eat and drink, sing and dance together for twelve days continuously and yet they maintain the highest code of conduct.

### **Mangkhap**

MANGKHAP literally means Last Drink. Because it comes off during the lean year, in the month of MARANG (July-August). This festival is observed after hard labour ploughing and transplantation of paddy seedlings. The best enjoyment of this festival is marked by the invitation to friends and relatives from other villages.

Each family will kill a pig, dress the meat in large chunks of about half a kilogram each. They brew the best wine

possible. Friends and relatives are invited to such a feast. So the saying 'Paowi Langchin' stands good.

### **Mawonzai**

MAWONZAI is a function of feasts of Thanksgiving for the New Crops. The time is mostly engaged in sacrifices and offerings to the god or goddess of health. During this time, they perform WONYAITHING KASHUN.

WONYAITHING is a miniature of a house covered with straws bearing grains of paddy collected from the about-to-be-harvested field. Birds and feathers are also used in the making. This is made as an abode of the person who died during the year. The Tangkhuls believe that the soul of a dead person lingers in this world until the next THISHAM that will be celebrated at the end of the year. The grains and birds used for the structure are food and meat for the dead person.

### **Rakhong Kakhon & Chum Kazang**

Immediately after the harvest was over, one day is set aside for cleaning the village well or wells. The whole village will join cleaning the site and the surroundings and to drain out the water from the well completely.

Early the next morning a woman of high standing will first draw water from the well that has been refilled with spring water over the night. Then the whole village will get their new (fresh pure) water to cook their dew harvest. Water drawn first by an immoral person is believed a precursor of misfortune, epidemic, etc. through the year.

### **Chum-Kazang**

After eating the new rice cooked with new water of the year, the men folk will go and stay at their cultivation huts over the night. The wives then make sacrifices and prayers, bury crabs in the paddy that has just been stored up during the harvest and perform things according to their traditional beliefs.

The next morning the housewives will take out some paddy from their respective granaries for the first time for family use. Only after that the man folk can come back home from their booths. It is something like the Feats of Booths of the Old Testaments time. This they observe for two consecutive nights.

A family that has a new bride will kill animals and make special prayers for her prosperity. This they call CAUMSINSA. For the bride or the young woman, this is the first time in her life to enter into the barns as a housewife.

This is followed by NASUT (Boring of ears). Well-to-do families kill animals to celebrate Boring of Ears of their children. Other children can also get their ears bored at this time.

After a break often days, comes off LONGRA-KASHAK (Feast of the Dormitories). Boys have their own dormitory and girls have their own. Unlike YARRA (YOUTH FESTIVAL) boys and girls have separate feasts; but they exchange food and drink to see which dormitory makes the best feast. Singing and dancing together they will not forget.

### **Thisham**

The last festival of the year is celebrated for the dead persons. It is a KATHI PHANIT (Festival of the dead), and they call it is a THISHAM (Farewell to the dead). THISHAM is celebrated for all the dead persons of a village died during the past twelve months.

For the purpose of sending off the soul of the dead, a person looking like him or her is searched out from any village to represent him or her during THISHAM; man, for man woman for woman; and of course, of the same age, physique, manner, etc. The representative is called THILAKPHO.

Thisham is marked by killing buffalos and other animals as can be provided by the family in the name of a dead family member. The animals killed in the name of a dead person will become the animal of a dead in the other world is their belief.

From the first day of the festival, THILAKAPHO (Representative of the Dead; is required to remain eating and drinking day and night until everything is over. He is not to move freely nor talk much. He is just to remain seated representing the dead for whom he or she is hired. He or she is dressed with new garments and served with food and drinks all day long. He is also invited by relatives to drink or dine. Psychologically it is a very emotional moment. There is a great lamentation among the family members, relatives, and in fact, the whole village is cast into a state of sadness.

**ZEILUN:** A place is selected usually the public ground within the village for the performance of the last rite. Late in the afternoon, all the families of the deceased bring food and drink to this place of their loved ones. Men of valour arrange and set the food in a line, keeping the disk of warrior in the front, and that of another warrior at the other end. The souls or spirit of the dead are to go to the land of the dead in line according to the arrangement of their food, one warrior is to take the lead and another to guard from behind.

All the THILAKAPHOS (representatives of the dead) take their seats by the sides of their respective food which had been arranged in one line. Then, THILAKAPHO of a rich man, in full dress, dances around the vicinity. The wife follows her husband (Thilakapho) weeping and crying. She holds a tankard in her hand and gives a drink to her husband at-times as he moves up and down dancing. A real drama of a man who is going to die now, and the plight of his wife who knows her husband is going to leave her as the sun sets is well depicted.

When the spirits are supposed to have taken their food, the Thilakaphos are taken back to their respective homes. There he or she is again given food and drink for the last sup. As the sun is setting, he will dance again and again around the courtyard and would pronounce, 'ara zатуgei, maunglui marakho' (Now I'm going away, never to come back home). As he pronounces, he would go dancing towards the village gate, family members follow him. At the Village Gate the Thilakapho lays down his VAKUI (headgear) and hand it over to his wife. Women THILAKAPHO lays down her TANSOP

(small basket) as a sign of departure from this world to the land of the dead.

**KAZEIKATA:** Soon after this, village young men take burning torches (split pine-wood) and throw them away at a place believed to be the gate to the land of the dead. This is known as KAZEIKATA. A good deal of traditional belief is observed in the throwing away of torches. The young men come back home running.

After about an hour later, when darkness envelopes world, a row of burning torches is seen moving in a line on the other side of the hill. All the souls of the dead go together holding his or her torch one after the other. To be true, the leader's and the guard's (first and the last) torches are seen brightest; children's dimmer. The torches can be seen by all the villagers. They can even recognize the torches of their loved ones as arranged at the time of ZEILUN. This traditional belief holds true until 1920 when Christianity prevailed in Tangkhul area.

## THANGAL NAGA TRIBE AND LINHUT-TANENIT (SEEDLING FESTIVAL)

- Khangba Anth Thangal,

Advisor, Thangal Naga Union, Manipur

Thangal Naga Tribe is a Mongolian race by origin and is among the earliest original inhabitant of Manipur. The Pre-ancestors of this tribe might have come from the North Eastern part of Asia. The most acceptable location of the earliest origin cannot be pin-pointed at the moment. However, it was clear that the people of this tribe were at Makhel (Makhek-Kapinram) for some period. From Makhel (Makhek-Kapinram) they were separated and went to different direction. Makhel (Makhek-Kapinram) was the only place which the ancestors could member and remain in the memories as the origin place. Makhel (Makhek-Kapinram) is situated in the present Senapati District of Manipur.

It appears that the people of Thangal Naga came out from the inner world, the place which was unknown to them. According to the ancient tradition and legend they were created by God from the beginning and came into existence as human beings. The ancestors of this tribe recognized Makhel (Makhek-Kapinram) as the origin place of Thangal tribe. After the departure from Makhel those who went down towards southern side was Thangal tribe and they are the founder of

the present Manipur dynasty. Thangal tribe though a minor and backward tribe today was an important and founder of Manipur dynasty according to the ancient chronicles and history of Manipur. There was a peculiar legend tree at Makhel which indicates all the good and bad omens and sings of the years and of the coming future.

The ancestors of this tribe start from Makhel the long journey of adventure and exploration of new and fertile land towards southern side. They found a place and settled down there and called it Angkaipang. The place was a steep range but quite safe from the point of Security. The climate was good and people healthy and have longer life. But for some certain reasons such as scarcity of water for drinking and firewood for domestic user the people could not live there for long. So, they started looking for better land with fertile soil, more abundant in water and other necessities. They went down towards southern side and found a good location with new hopes and settled there. They called the village

Angkailongdi. Was one of the biggest village of the tribe. The situation and climate was excellent too. The people were more healthier and have longer life in this village. Food, drink and other necessities were plentiful. Feast and entertainment are excessively frequent and the joy and happiness of the people reached its zenith. There were 999 houses in Angkailongdi village. The people of this tribe lived here for many generations.

After some century the people were again restless and so much envy and jealousy for the good land and fertile soil of the adjoining southern plain area. Subsequently, they decided to leave this place and go down for more fertile soil. This was the last Exodus and journey of exploration for new fertile land for this tribe.

At last the people of this tribe settled down in 9 (nine) different places and called the villages as (i) Mayangkhang (ii) Tumuyon Khullen (iii) Tumuyon Khunou (iv) Tumunoupokpi (v) Thangal Surung (vi) Makeng (vii) Mapao THangal (viii) Mayangkhang Ningthoupham (Separated from Mayangkhang) (ix) Angkailongdi (re-established) Formerly the land occupied by this tribe was known as Thangal Hills

but later on changed to Sadar Hilis, The land and boundary of the tribe was from the north right from the boundary of Angkailongdi village upto the extreme south of Mapao Thangal village boundary in the south and from the west right from the Koubru foot hills upto the river of Iril in the east Thangal tribe was also known and recorded by the British as Koirao, Kolyas and Mayangkhang.

The Administrative system of Thangal tribe was democratic and liberal type. Each village had its village chief and council of elders and heads of the clans. Cultivation was the main occupation and both Jhum and Wet cultivation were practiced by the people of this tribe. Since Agriculture was the main occupation the entire way of living as Agriculture oriented. The cultural and social activities are intimately connected with Agricultural pursuits. Every Agricultural operation eg. tilling, seedling, sowing and harvesting was accompanied with or followed by village festivals in almost every month. Among this festivals "Linhut-Tangnit" (Seedling Festival) in Keithak-ha (February) was one of the most important and biggest festival of Thangal Tribe.

Linhut-Tangnit (Seedling Festival) was celebrated in the month of Keithak-ha (February). It is prohibited to sow any seed in the village for the year before this festival. Linhut-Tangnit (Seedling Festival) was observed 3 (three) days usually. The Chief of the village had to stay inside his room locked and take up fasting for three days. No one is allowed to enter his room or see him. He will see vision in his dream and this dream is all important one and this, he will repronounce to all. During this period all the male villagers will entertain themselves by playing hockey which is the main game of the festival. This Hockey game will be banned or disallowed to play after this festival.

The Chief of the village will first start seedling experiment by mustard seed. This seedling will be carefully observed. If the seed sprout well and germinate properly then the year will be productive, the yield of the crops will be plentiful.

If the significant is bad the year will be unproductive, the yield of the crops will be meager. By this experiment the whole crop production for the prevailing year is predicted and thus



this festival is called "Linhut-Tangnit". After this Linhut-Tangnit the villagers start seedling, sowing and plantation for the year. The seedling festival is strictly observed by the people of Thangal Naga tribe in Manipur.

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# FESTIVAL OF THE ZELIANGRONGS

- Gaithaorei Ganmei

In February there is the "Festival of the seedlings (Naphun Tasuat Ngai). It continues upto 4 days. In the first day, the villagers celebrate in groups to give the para-phrasing Khangchiu and Kailiu. This festival has special rites which are to be carried out by the chief. The chief is too fast for two days by avoiding family life. And also not touching any unclean things. This is a sort of purification undertaken by the chief on behalf of all the village gate, taking all samples of seedling which have to be used that year along with 14 cocks and hen. He deposited the seedling at the gate an sacrifice the fowls and prays to the God of prosperity. On the fourth day, pigs are killed and there is a grand community feast. The best portion is offered to God (Raguang) on an altar by the chief with some elders. (These festivals are performed among the Upper Rongmei villages at Tamenglong District).

Within these four days the villagers observed Genna. Nobody was allowed to move out of the village a no visitor was allowed to enter the village. No fire was allowed beyond the Kitchen.

Gudui-Ngai or Ginger soup festival is performed in April/ May. it is celebrate to relieve the people from the strain of hard work while sowing their fields. The chief throws away a hoe as a symbol to mark the end of sowing season.

In October/November there is the second most important festival of the year, known as GAAN NGAI. It continues for almost one and half a week. Before the festival begins, the people pay homage to those who are already dead in the family. Household animals are killed and cooked and along with these, a taste of wine is added and offered on the dead man's/woman's/child's tomb.

After this the village folk wait for the first crowing of cock, selected Youngman blow horns from their respective Khnagchui (boys dormitory) to announce that Gaan Ngai has come. This horn blow has a symbolic meaning; first, it is to make people ready to pierce the ears of their sons and daughters born in between the last Gaan Ngai and the coming one. Old folks are entrusted with the task of piercing the ears and earrings are put by boys and girls. Any baby born after this has to wait for the next Gaan Ngai. Secondly, the sound of a horn can be heard even from a distant place. Peoples believed that in the like manner the ears of their babies should to be sound.

Next day comes the MATUI, the village folks celebrate this groupwise, Matui is meant only for the young people. Here bulls or cows are killed, singing competition, dancing and group songs are the most Important items. It lasted for 4 days.

Some days after Matui, there is a very important rite called RILIAMEI to mark the celebration. Every male purifies himself by one touching anything female on the coming night. As the morning comes, all the male, except the suckling, will be at the gate and chief who is also a priest, will offer sacrifices of 14 cocks and hen to God for protection from enemies and to give strength to befit them as Man. After this, they march across the length and breadth of the village with a uniform ho-hoing known Haikamei. From this, everyone departs to his respective khang-chui and makes fire through a special method used for the purpose. This fire is distributed among different group if they so desire. In Khangchui food is prepared for every male (By male only) who went to the gate. Any items touched by female are considered to be impure and this is forbidden. This type of food taken respectively

Khangchiu is called "Riliamtak" or the "Soldiers food" in English.

One or two days after Riliamei, The people select the most purified khangchiu and the khangchiu in turn will select the most purified persons to collect thumbsize bamboos known as INCHI to conduct a rites are performed by the priest. The priest and the activities have to purify themselves and have to fast the night before.

In November, there is a festival known as Katuai Ngai (festival of the sesamum). Although this festival is observed annually, it is popularly meant for this rich. Since all the villagers are cultivators, they measure their wealth in terms of the rice, cows, bulls, mithuns etc. by the rich. There is also a rule that in every harvest a person whose paddy is the biggest has to give mithun or a cow or a bull etc. It is during this period that in sub-head Chaga (Ringai) great feast of merit like. Bauru and Tarany are performed. Chaga which is the name of festival and Bu means Month.

Various rites and formalities are undertaken before the celebration of Chaga. Chaga is nicknamed Ringai (warriors festival). The first stage of preparation is the dedication of all the children whose ears have been pierced in Gaan Ngai. Dedication is the duty of the parents who entrust the work to the ladies who delivers the baby during birth. The rites are simple, a husk fire is made at the front room of the house and the smoke is allowed to ascend upward to the dwelling place of God. People believed that the noticing the smoke God will bless the baby. It takes two days the first day for boys and the second day for the girls.

At dawn people pay homage to those who are already dead, known as theikatimei. At day they collect large plates of stone to lie flat on the tombs memorials (Only once for dead man/woman).

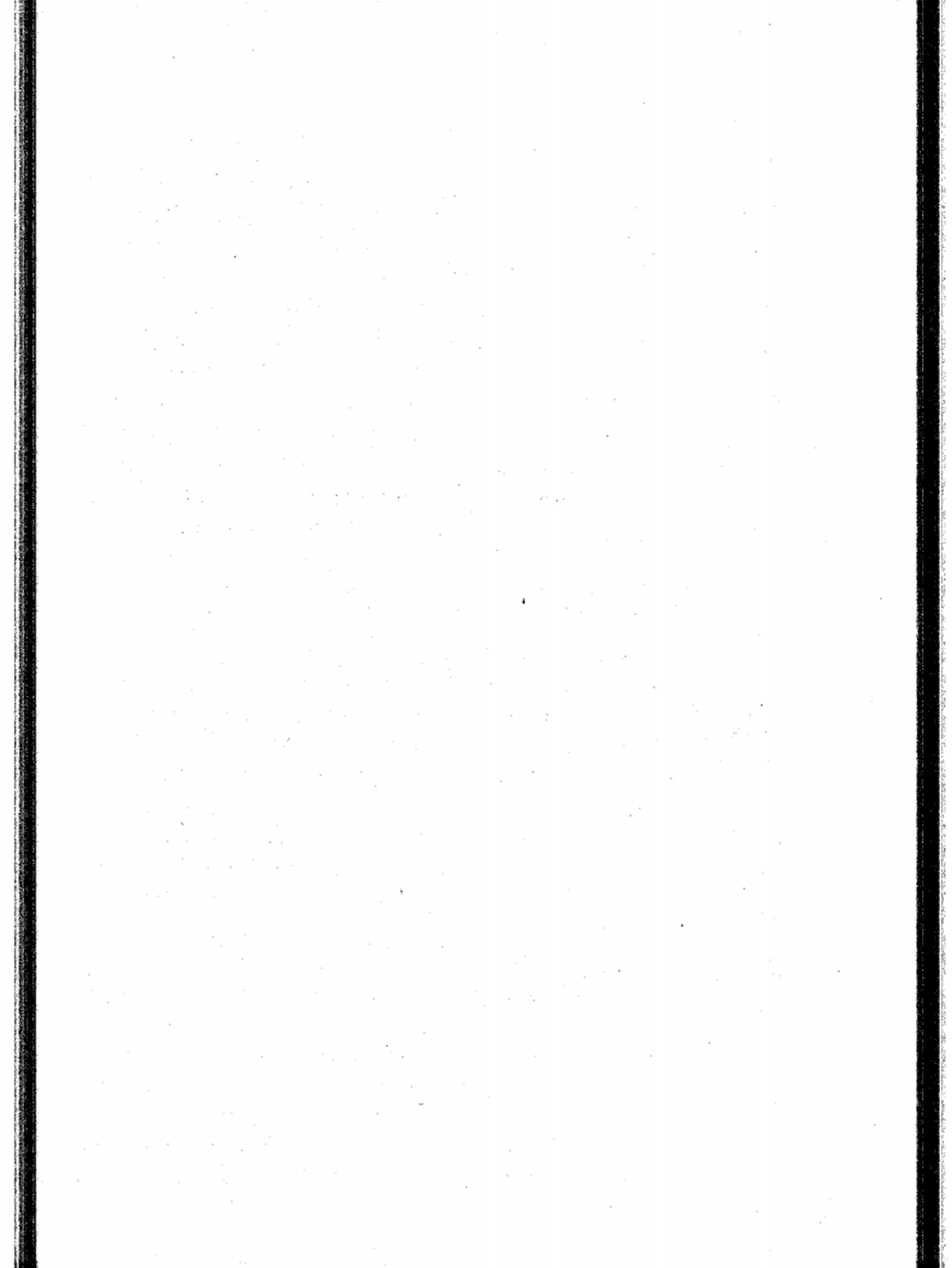
The next day comes the Chakak which means sanctification. The village folks clean their bodies by washing. Every household item is also cleaned. Everyone observed fast. Since the babies are unable to fast, they are given food before day break to enable them to observed chakak. Early

in the morning all the boys are called and longjump competitions are conducted, with shotput for the adults. Fasting lasts upto 10 or 12 a.m. After this, the chief declares the end of chakak and everyone enjoys the best food cooked for that special occasion. As part of the festivities, general sports like longjump, shotput, javelin throw competitions are conducted during the whole day. The next morning, a dog is sacrificed by the chief to turn out evil spirit from the village.

The next day comes the much awaited Chaga or Warriors festival. Although the name is warrior-festival, there is nothing militant of that sort. Rather it is a festival of merry-making, where the young and the old alike participate, Chaga lasts for four days. The first day is an invocation to God to help them as warriors by performing rites called Tathe Phaimei. In the morning, FIRE is made for the whole village by frictioning a cane against a wood.

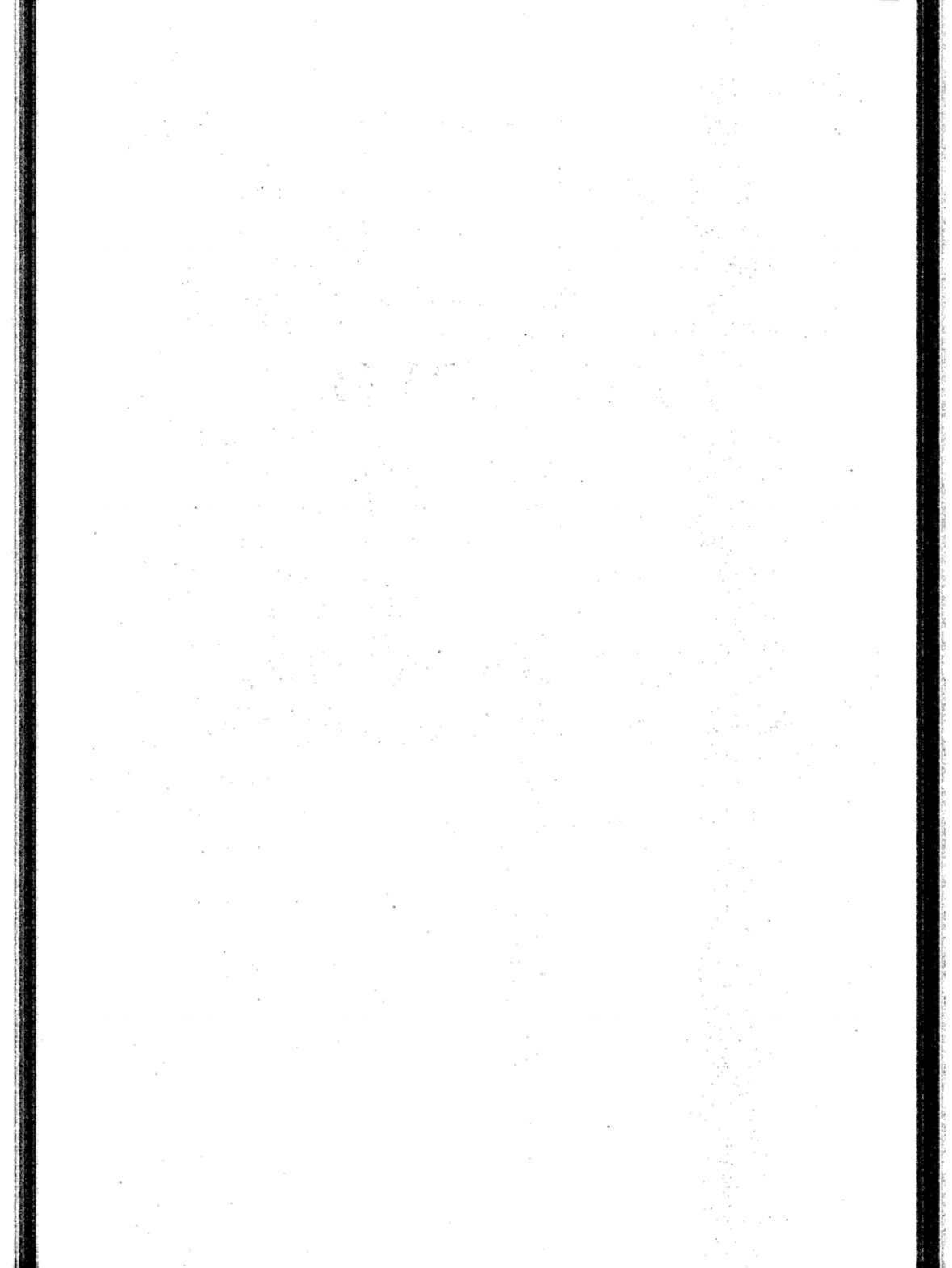
This fire is to be used during the Chaga. On the second day the selected Youngman throws dart at the village gate, the effigy of ma, and animals are the target. Next comes Jou alaimei (Monkey Chase). Many people with the accompaniment of various musical instruments, shout to turn out monkeys which are a menace to their fields. It is also said as some that the deeper meaning of chasing of the monkeys is that scaring away the evil spirits. On this day, many hunters show their skill by hunting various animals. The fourth day marks the competition of rice beer and other wine known as Jou Puanlaurmei. In the like fashion, women take part in address by dressing the best competition in cloths and shawls, which are entirely their make. Throughout the night, all the village folks caroled the village with songs and dance.

The whole length of Chaga is marked with merriment and people enjoy the best of their products. Best food and best wine are the most talked about things.



# **PART TWO**

## **FESTIVALS OF THE NAGAS OF NAGALAND**





## Name of the Festival, Tribes, and Month of Celebration of the Nagas of Nagaland

| Festival    | Tribe       | Month     |
|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| Tsukhenyie  | Chakhesangs | January   |
| Gaan-Ngai   | Zeliangrong | January   |
| Mimkut      | Kukis       | January   |
| Bishu       | Kacharis    | January   |
| Sekrenyi    | Angamis     | February  |
| Monyu       | Phom        | April     |
| Aoling      | Konyaks     | April     |
| Miu         | Khiamungam  | May       |
| Moatsu      | Aos         | May       |
| Tuluni      | Sumis       | July      |
| Nyaknylum   | Changs      | July      |
| Metemneo    | Yumchunger  | August    |
| Mongmong    | Sangtams    | September |
| Yemshe      | Pochuris    | October   |
| Tokhu Emong | Lothas      | November  |
| Ngadah      | Rengma      | November  |

# 1

## SEKRENYI FESTIVAL (ANGAMIS)

Sekkrenyi also called Tekrunyie by the Chakhesangs is the main festival of Angamis and Chakhesangs. It usually falls on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of 'KEZEI' which is the second month of the year. It is also called Phouaanyi by the Angamis. This festival is observed for ten days; the festival provides every section of the community and the household to contribute his or her mite for success.

The festival starts with 'KIZEI' ceremony performed by the lady of the house. A few drops of specially prepared rice-water called 'ZUMHO' are put into leaves and placed by the three main posts of the house. The First Day starts with young and old going to the village well for having a bath and drain out the old water so that by next morning fresh spring water could collect in the well. After cleaning, no one is allowed to use the well and women are not allowed to touch the water. Some village youths keep watch over the well during the night. By dawn, next morning all young men, except very young ones, go to the well and wash their faces, hands and feet. The ceremony is called 'DZUSEVA' (touching the sleeping water) assures them that all their misfortunes and illnesses have gone down the drain along with the water they have just used to wash themselves.

On return, a healthy cock is sacrificed by throttling it with bare hands. If the right leg is passed over the left when the cock falls down, it is considered to be a good omen. It is from fourth day that a three-day session of music starts. It is called 'THERAHIE'. The singers sing, drink and create an atmosphere of amusement, relaxation and joy. On the seventh

day, excursions are arranged and young people go hunting. It is on the eight when the most significant ceremony like "BRIDGE-PULLING" or "GATE-PULLING" is performed or inter-village friendship visits are exchanged. Until the close of the festival, no villager is expected to go to his field for work. Youth Hostels (MORUNGS) present a charming spectacle. Attractive youth flanked by young silken haired and golden limbed damsels sit for hours together and hum tunes of by-gone ages and recreate past where no care touched human soul.

## 2

### MOATSU FESTIVAL (AOS)

Aos observe Moatsu - after the sowing is done and the mother earth begins to show a sign of fertility. It provides the Aos a period of recreation after the strenuous job which goes into clearing fields, burning jungles and sowing seeds. Stretching over a period of six days, the festival is marked by vigorous songs and dances, merry making and fun.

Morning before the festival starts as the sun rises, the priest of the village 'morung' cuts the throat of a fowl at the base of the main post of the morung. Next day - the first day of the festival - different Morung Organizations sacrifice a pig or a cattle. The priest of the morung is entitled to have the head of the sacrificed animals while the remaining portion is divided equally between the members of the morung and the village elders. The village elders in their turn share it with the village priest. The ceremony reflects how the young generation respects the elders and the elders pay their reverence to their moral mentor. During the next five days, villages are cleaned, morungs are fortified and the joy of life is kissed with a sense of fulfillment. Recreation infusing a new vigour. The Aos start their next journey with more enthusiasm.

Aos have another festival called 'TSUNGREM MONG'. It is celebrated on the eve of the harvest. Parties of young and old wearing their colourful costumes sing songs and perform vigorous dances to express their gratitude to the supreme power for helping the crops grow well and good harvest.

These festivals provide opportunities to the budding generation and village stalwarts to demonstrate their intellectual skill and physical prowess.

A hand of young man holds the stage and tells amusing stories about their elders. Peals of laughter greet the listeners and the young and the old jump in dancing with joy and excitement.

These festivals are usually rounded off by a tug-of-war between men and women. Stories are galore that men lose to please their womenfolk. However, none has refuted the argument - that attracted by charm of the opponents, absorbed by their sweet songs and regaled by their magical scented presence, men lose the game gracefully.

The only defence offered is that men have to pull uphill and the women downhill. Whatever the spirit behind the sport, it is a treat to see and an honour to participate.

# 3

## TERHUNYI FESTIVAL (CHAKHESANGS)

Terhunyi called 'Erunvi' by Chakhesang is a very solemn festival which is celebrated by the Chakhesangs and Angamis in December after the harvest is brought home.

Bountiful (rice) collection provides a chance to an ambitious rich man to throw a grand feast called 'feast of merit' in order to display his generosity and fellow-feelings as also to acquire a distinct status in respect in the society.

In recognition of this feast his guest erect a huge stone either before his house or by the side of the road leading to his hut. The sacrifice becomes entitled to wear a spedal type of cloth.

It is said that while Sekkrënyi is meant for the young for the purification and elevation, Terhunyi is for the rich and old acquiring name and fame.

A story told of this festival: It is said that a spirit Ziso married a girl belonging to Merema village. The mother-in-law came to visit Ziso. Her daughter told her what she had to ask Ziso as a present. It was a small basket in which Ziso had kept by his magical power; all types of animals, birds and beats. She got this basket, but disobeying advice given by Ziso carried away by curiosity, she opened the lid of the basket on herway. A large number of birds and beasts who could fly or run escaped. The women could put mithun, cow, pig and dog etc. back.

She came home and opened the lid of the basket again and remained with them behind closed doors for five days. The animals became tamed.

After some time Ziso and his wife visited the women and found huge number of domestic animals. Ziso asked his mother-in-law to sacrifice fat animals and to enjoy a feast in his name. Ziso became spirit of this festival. Every year, rich men throw feast and enjoy it in the name of Terhunyi.

The hall mark of the observation is the dance procession taken out by young men in full dress. The procession moves with grace and shouts of joy rend the quietude of hills and before the echo fades away another shout follows.

# 4

## NAKNYU LUM FESTIVAL (CHANGS)

Strong, hardy and handsome Chang Nagas celebrate 'Naknyu Lum' in the month of August for six days. During this festival, no new marriage is allowed and performed and men keep aloof from their wives. Prayers are held for the dead ones and offerings are given to the priests.

During this festival, Changs decorate their houses with a special kind of tree called 'NGUNAM'. Prayers are held to propitiate the SKY GOD as it is believed that a thunder storm symbolizes misfortune. During the nights of celebrations, every house lights a huge fire which should be visible from far away. In the Morungs, vigorous songs regale boys and girls; who enjoy feast and also arrange various games and sports. Such rites and rituals are also observed by the Phoms and Khimungans. Reason could be that these tribes have closer social relationship than the tribes living in other areas.



## MIA AND TSOKUM FESTIVAL (KHIAMNGANS)

Khiamngans have two beautiful festivals namely: MIA and TSOKUM. MIA is the festival before the sowing of the seeds while TSOKUM is associated with harvesting. Once the sowing is done, Khiamngans feel relaxed and offer prayers for good harvest. Jhuming, being the mode of cultivation, the farmers have to visit their fields off and on to extract weeds and to see whether their crops are growing well.

It is in the month of October that the harvesting starts. After the grains are collected and the farmer is satisfied with his labours, he offers his gratitude to God with songs and dances. To share his pleasure with his friends, he holds feasts and enjoys life. It is something like an outdoor feast or picnic for a week. The villagers go to their fields and cook and eat there. The children in their gayful dresses roam in the harvested fields where they sing and dance. In October, the sun shines bright and migratory birds picking at the stubs trots in the close by rivers to engage the attention of those who could spare time for them from fun and frolicking provide enough game.

Winter being very close, Khiamngans collect firewood and store enough Zu (local wine) so that they can pass the winter with happiness and contentment.

# 6

## AOLING MONYU FESTIVAL (KONYAKS)

Sowing in Konyak area spread over 75 villages which continues till the end of March but the villagers find time to celebrate their major festival Aoling Monyu. Aoling Monyu marks the end of winter or the old year and heralds New Year beginning spring with varieties of flowers - white, pink, blue and yellow.

Stretching over six days, this festival provides the manifestations of the rich cultural heritage of Konyaks - a major tribe of Nagas. Konyaks are well built and smart; they are very fond of orchids which are found in plenty with different sizes and colours. The Konyaks use them for decoration. Men and women practice tattooing all over their bodies even on their faces. During the festival, singing parties are led by Morung (Bachelors dormitory) leaders. The normal theme of the songs are about the victory over the enemy; assurances to the villagers for their protection from enemy's wrath and prayers to the Sky-God for bountiful harvest. Every household prepares the best feasts and shares it with their married sisters and give presents to them. Married daughters also visit their parents and share their problems and hardships.

Konyaks have very touching and bountiful love songs. During the festivals, boys and girls exchange these songs with mirth and at times agony. One of such songs run as:

To my beloved's house

In a far off village  
I hurry along  
Let us be fast,  
I have lost the taste of food  
Drink has no meaning for me,  
It is love and love alone  
Let me not be lost.  
And yet another song goes as  
There are tears in your eyes  
When you met me  
But laughter when you are with your wife,  
Why do you leave your smile  
Behind when you come to me?  
Remember the days of our youth  
Don't forget our sweet embraces.

# 7

## TOKHU EMUNG FESTIVAL (LOTHAS)

Tokhu Emung is the harvest festival of the Lothas. The harvest is done; granaries are full. Now, there is time to enjoy the fruits of one's hard labor. Friends are invited, Mithuns are sacrificed; past hatred and animosity are forgiven and new ties are forged, and new friendship and intimacy are discovered. Wild cries of joy echo the green hills and narrow valleys. One feels as if the stones are given tongues to shout as 'Oh farmers, toil your fields with love and care; now on, nobody has the courage to stop your merry-making and joy'.

Here the priest gives the signal to start the festival. The priest accompanied by aids (Yinga) and baskets goes around the village collecting contribution of unhusked rice from every home. When offering is made, the priest takes a handful of rice and offers prayers and thus he puts the contributions into his basket. A portion of this collection is used to buy a pig and the rest is used for making 'madhu' (rice beer). The pig is killed and cut, meat is distributed to the contributors. This ritual is considered as contributing and sharing village prosperity. The main features of the festival are community songs and dances, youth dances, mirth, feat and fun. If any stranger come to the village during the festival, he is not allowed to enter to the village till the festival is over, he has to stay outside the village gate. He, however, enjoys the hospitality of the villagers with love and care; food and drink are sent profusely to the stranger. Tokhu festival also provides the occasion when persons offer prayers to the departed souls.

The family who lost any member during the year performs his or her last rites. Villagers remain in their village till the festival is over.

Young boys and girls make engagements during the festival which are soon followed by happy marriages.

## 8

### MONYU FESTIVAL (PHOMS)

Phoms have four important festivals; of these, Monyu is celebrated with greater enthusiasm; preparations are made with care and minute details. Monyu falls in the month of April soon after the seed sowing season. It also marks the end of winter and the beginning of summer and rains. Prayers are held to propitiate spirits and offerings are made to the Supreme Power for successful crops.

Stretched over 12 days, the first six days are spent in community feasts, amusements, dances and music and the following week is devoted to social welfare. This is the time when new bamboo mugs replace the old ones; firewood is collected and the rice-beer is stored. New clothes are woven and heavy apparels are stored.

The head of the family conducts the celebration and opens the festival. He sacrifices a chicken to the gods by sprinkling fresh blood to all the posts of the house and barn. He takes out the intestine and predicts the future of his family. Meat is cooked with prawns and crabs mixed with dried bamboo-shoots and ginger. Cooked meat is then carefully put into leaves and is tied to the posts around the house with ceremonial prayers. Any mistake in collecting the leaves or placing them in the set form can be interpreted as failure of the rituals and bad omens. After the ceremony is performed, the entire family members sit making a circle and they enjoy food. On that day, only the white rice is eaten as it signifies prosperity.

# 9

## YEMSHE (POCHURY)

*October is the month of festivity which every Pochury anxiously awaits, every year to celebrate their greatest festival Yemshe. Yemshe is the festival of welcoming the new harvest and blessing. All the Pouchuries, young and old, rich and poor celebrate this festival with great pomp and gaiety anticipating a good harvest which they deserve after a year's hard labour under scorching sun and merciless rain. No one is allowed to harvest etc. until the whole period of festival is over*

Originally, the festival commence from the last part of September with different categories of observances till the final day which falls in the first week of October every year. Yemshe is observed only on the 5<sup>th</sup> October keeping in tune with the final days of the traditional observance of the festival.

When the time approaches, the Village Spokesman will announce the arrival of Yemshe. The very next day of the festivities will begin with the observance of the first part of rituals.

There will be preparations. The Youth of the Village will clean whole village, footpaths, wells and fields and construct Baskets making-cum-Resting Places. After that the head of the family will perform all rituals. Necessary materials used in rituals are fastened to the main post of the front house. Engaged couples (fiancé & fiancée) will renew their relationship with exchange of food or wine and eat together. Many young couples come to know each other and get themselves engage during this period. As such, this festival is important and enjoyable moment particularly to young people and farmers in general. This is known as the Big Yemshe.

The small Yemshe, like big Yemshe, is also celebrated with rituals. The sanctification of the House, a ritual feast has to be hosted by a rich family. All the villagers will observe the period with great solemnity till the end of the period.

The family who host the Sanctification Feast has to fulfill the following conditions before the feast day.

1. The family who host the Sanctification Feast will have to provide wine to all families of the village.
2. The family will have to host dance party of his (head of the family) age-group, men and women in the village and in Khel wise as well. Feast will be given to the dancers, and meat will be distributed to all his age-group friends.
3. Cutting of Bamboo Mugs will be held twice. All the host's clansmen/nephews will make new bamboo mugs. They will take wine from these mugs which will be kept with the host. Also all the old Mugs will be collected from every house and kept in the host's family for drinking wine.
4. Only paddy rice will be arranged (not millet, maize etc.) and distribute it to all the houses by the host and later the cooked rice will be again collected and redistributed to all the families in the village.
5. All the clansmen will take one Mithun and a Chicken to a river on the way to the Jhum field and feast. They will construct a Resting Shed there for the host of the Sanctification Feast. It is believed that in the second life, those who have not hosted the Sanctification Feast cannot sigh with a deep breath as 'ewhi', but can only say 'Korowhi' and those who have not performed the Resting Shed Feast they can only say 'owhi'.
6. For reserving of frogs, one axe each for three rivers is given to the villagers as frogs in these three rivers are reserved. This will be followed by giving out a big feast to all the village elders. After that it will be announced in the village that frogs are reserved by



the host of Sanctification or Yemshe Festival and no other should go to these rivers to catch it.

7. After wine and food is arranged, the master of the festival will ask his villagers to fetch him pine-wood and he will give a big feast to his villagers. Men will take 6 pieces of meat while women will take only 5 pieces.
8. All the clansmen will carry well-prepared food and wine and go to the reserved rivers and make bridges/ladders for frogs catchers to enable them to go to any part of the river. At the same time, they shall eat and drink and enjoy themselves. This is a part of many games they play.
9. A chicken will be kept in a cage on a selected tree on the way to the field. After that a selected group will go to that spot with dried frogs where chickens was kept and have a feast there. Every household have to perform this. Even the poorest family have to perform this ritual by roasting brinjal as the substitute of frogs and chicken.
10. It is traditionally believed that the most fertile lands were under the control of devils. Sacrificial acts also therefore have to be performed according to the fertility of the land. For the most fertile land a Mithun has to be sacrificed, then a pig and the less fertile land a chicken has to be sacrificed in the field. Two big gourds of wine will be carried, one for halfway and the other for sacrificial consumption. While coming back from their fields a particular group will not mix up with another group. So, a Mithun group, Pig group and Chicken group shall come back home separately. Likewise, wine also will be taken separately.

After all the arrangements like collection of green vegetables, meat etc. and performances of rituals are completed, the master will select 6 supervisors; two for washing ginger, four to supervise the butchers for preparation

of the feast for the whole village. All young and old will come and help the host in preparation of the feast. In this feast, Mithun, Pigs and Chicken will be slaughtered. If there is no Mithun three pigs will substitute a Mithun. Womenfolk will pound rice and cook while the menfolk will be busy for meat, and other difficult jobs. By sundown, all villagers, from youngest to the oldest will come together to attend the great feast.

Few quantities of all sorts of food stuff and rice grains etc. shall be shared and offered it to the dead souls as farewell gifts and greetings of the Yemshe Feast.

The last day of the feast will be impressively observed as the feast cleansing day. All will remain at home and no one will do anything and go on journey or anywhere. From the very next day all types of harvest and collection of house constructional materials etc. will begin as the happiest moment for the farmers has come with the blessing of God.

Courtesy: National Informatics Centre. Govt. of Nagaland.

## NGADAFESTIVAL (RENGMAS)

Spread over six days, Ngada festival falls in the last week of November. On the first day able bodied persons go to the nearby river and have bath. Chicken is the only meat which is allowed on this day. Ngada is also associated with offering prayers in the memory of those beloved who left this world for heaven above. Like Id, Christmas and Diwali; Rengmas but new utensils and clothes during this festival. The fifth day of the festival is observed as the day for forgiveness. Anybody who has offended his or her friends in the previous months takes a forgiving spirit and goes to the offended persons and make amends. Without a word, differences are patched up and friendship is revived. Presents are exchanged and promises are uttered saying "Let us forget and forgive our past mistakes" and such words resound every home and hearth of the Rengmas. On the last day colourful dances are held throughout the village followed by community feasts.

It is during this festival that the Morung (Youth Dormitory) beds, or village gate is erected. This is a beautiful ceremony where young and old men go to the jungle and drag the Morung bed or village gate with most solemn behavior wearing traditional shawls and clothes. Village gate, for example, is cut from one single huge tree carved out with traditional art. Upon their return, women folk await their men with home-brewed rice beer. Festival is charming and a feast to the eye to watch the whole drama. Gate-pulling ceremony is also observed by the Angamis and the Chakhesangs with similar rituals.

This Tokhu-Emung festival is the time for renovating village gate, clearing roads and foot-paths, drinking village wells and repair houses. These jobs are done by the males while the men are on the job; females weave clothes and look after the domestic chore and needs.

## AMONGMONG FESTIVAL (SANGTAM)

The main feature of the Sangtam festival-Amongmong is the worship of the God of the house and the three cooking stones in the fire place. The festival falls in the first week of September when the new crop is ready for harvesting.

The green signal for the start of the festival is given by the priest of the village with prayers and rites. This festival spread over six days having different ceremonies attached to each day. On the first day called - Jansika (last day for field works), the oldest woman of the household worships the three cooking stones early in the morning by making offerings of rice, meat and wine to them. Nobody, even domestic animal is allowed to taste food before this prayer is performed.

As the sun rises high, young people in their best morung attire begin their songs of bravery and prowess. There are those who spill their hearts with ditties; and religiously their girl-friends joined them. There is, thus, very little room for jealousy frustration or even heartache.

During the festival, water is drawn with great care; first the oldest man of the village goes to the village well. He is followed by others. Each of them must cover his or her head by green leaves lest he/she be attacked by cholera. On this day, villagers do not eat maize as it is believed that this may cause small-pox. On the second day, fire wood is collected and stored. This day is called - Singkithsa (collection of firewood for the festival).

The third day is devoted for worshipping to 'cooking stone' by all. The day is called 'Nusuyanguothep'.

The fourth day is called 'Kikha-langpi' which literal meaning is 'clearing the roads to the well'. The fifth day is also devoted for collection of firewood and water for community feast and on the sixth day, harvest begins. In the evening, all the villagers gather together in the open fields and enjoy games and sports, songs and dances.

There is another sentimental festival of the Sangtams called: 'Hunaponpi' meaning - show of affection to near and dear ones. Prayers are said for the departed relatives. It is a festival where children take a more prominent part. On the first day, every household manages to get a cock. On the next day, the youngest child of the family will touch the cock tenderly and this process passes on to the next brother or sister. Then a cock fight is followed, specially young boys and girls enjoy this game. The winner of this game is given the title - Cock-King.

In the evening, there is a chicken feast. During the feast, the parents offer prayers to God for long and prosperous life for their children.

## TULUNI FESTIVAL (SEMA)

The three most important festivals of Semas are Tuluni, Saghu and Kuchu. However, throughout all the twelve months, Semas have one or the other ceremony connected with agriculture. For instance, festival Luwu-qhi is the month when deforestation takes place for sowing millet which is done in the next month Suphu-qhi. For another two months clearing of weeds, stumps and tender stalks of millet continue. In the fifth month, called Chixu-qhi, rice is sown and in the next month, Moza-qhi - tender paddy stalks are cleared. It is the seventh month called Ani - when paddy ears begin to form and the stalks wave to gladden the hearts of the farmers and that time Semas offer prayers to Alhou (Timilhou) so that He helps the plants to ripen.

Tuluni falls in the seventh month corresponding to the month of July. During this month, festivals are fixed by the village priest (Awou) sometime in the quarter of the month. This festival spreads over five days. On the first day called Asuza, nobody is allowed to leave the village. On the second day, men of high status and persons of affluence who have previously given feast of merit and have acquired respectable position prepare rice for brewing rice beer called Azhichen. On the third day, grand feasts are held and everybody eats pork. Fourth day is the day of prayers and offer prayers to litba-god of fruitfulness who grows and protects the crops. These offerings are performed by the married couples at the foot of the front centre post of their respective houses. Chastity is the hall-mark of this celebration. On the fifth day, the male population gives a face-lift to the village, foot-path

leading to the fields are cleared and drinking wells are repaired and approach paths are cleaned. In the eight month called - Sughi - other crops are harvested. In the following month called Ghile, paddy is harvested and in the eleventh month called - Thipu - paddy is carried home and stored in the granaries. Then comes the winter called -Ahuna - when the new rice is pounded and eaten. Meticulous care is taken in wearing clothes of one's own status. Ceremonies are punctuated by vigorous songs and dances.

Semas are ferocious warriors called head-hunting by the early anthropologists and successful head-hunting raids used to inspire local poets to sing songs of joy and victory. These raids are now a thing of the past but songs continue to be sung during festivals. One of such songs is:

"Brave, killed and brought  
The head of the enemy village  
He wore hair of her head  
Its sight gladden  
The heart of his beloved.



## METEMNEO FESTIVAL (YIMCHUNGERS)

Yimchungers celebrate Metemneo festival after the harvest of millet. This festival is also connected with praying for the souls of the departed ones. It is a sentimental ceremony for those whose dear ones left for heavenly abode during the year. An elder person known as 'Khiungpu' offers prayers and inaugurates the festivals. Festival is spread over five days. Everyday, having a separate name viz. Site, Shito, Zhimto, Chiresok and Siresok.

On the first day, each village is cleaned by entire community. The damaged roads and homes during the rainy season are repaired, on the second day, paths leading to the fields are put in right shape. Landslides, which are very common during rains are cleared. On the third day, inter-village roads are taken up. On the fourth day, water ponds and springs are cleansed. This gives a new look to the village and its surroundings. During the festival, friends are invited, gifts are exchanged and dancers, old and young go round the village which are charming, a feast to the eyes.

As this festival has a strong agricultural bias, the agricultural implements are also cleaned and tools are sharpened and even worshipped their daos, spades and oven.

It is during Metemneo festival that young boys and girls are engaged and solemn verbal agreement is made by exchanging gifts among the family members. If new babies are born during the festival, six pieces are given to the male child, and five to the girl child indicating that the male has six and the female has five souls.

## ZELIANGRONG FESTIVALS

Zeliangrong people celebrate almost every month a festival. But Meleyingyi (fire making), Chaga, Chakanngan Nagai, Ringai, Hega are considered most important,

Meleyingyi is celebrated to herald spring. It relates to the prayers for vigorous, prosperous, healthy life of the living human beings. It is with a beautiful invocation that the religious preceptor announces the start of the festival. It says:

"Au-We - Supreme Power,  
Give us enough food  
Protect our lives  
Inject fortitude and prowess  
Let the women rest  
No weaving now,  
This is time of joy  
It is the moment of fun".

The proclamation day of the festival is named Henyiga. Zeutau- the first day of the festival is devoted to preparing meat, food, wine and collection of plantation leaves. With fall of dusk, drinking and merry-making begin.

On the second day, called Mangkang healthy dogs are killed for food as their meat is considered to be highly nourishing. In the afternoon, young men go to the village well and take bath. On the concluding day, the sixth day, the village elders lit fire for jhum land. When evening comes, the youth gather in the Morung where they have their drinks.

While they are holding their cups, bevy of girls approach them singing and ask them to leave their cups and join them in dance. The song and dance sequence is followed by a game where girls challenge their friends to recognize them by the impression of their hands which is made on some clay.

Seventh day is devoted to sweep the remains of festivals and a New Year begins.

Zeliangs, boys and girls, are very charming dancers. When they whirl around with their graceful rhythmic steps; humming sweet songs, it conjures up the vision of great dawn when the elusive melody of nature became real and alive in flesh and blood. You are provoked to touch. You see it dancing. You see it singing.

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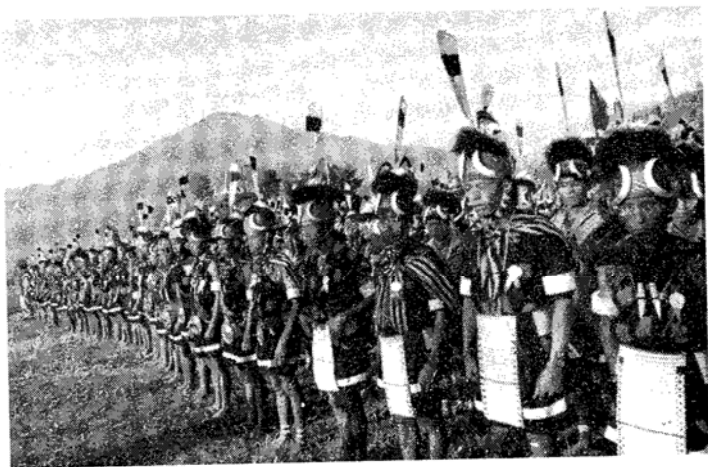
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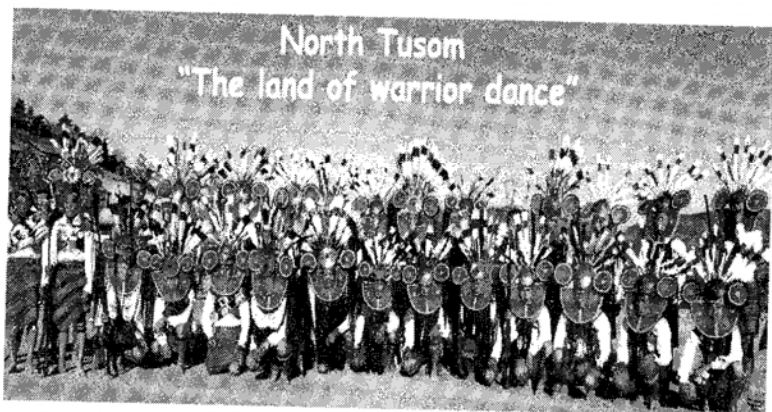
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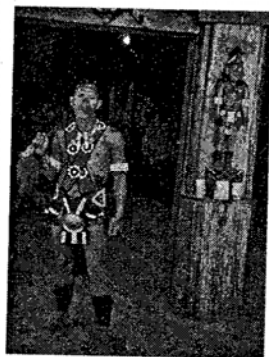


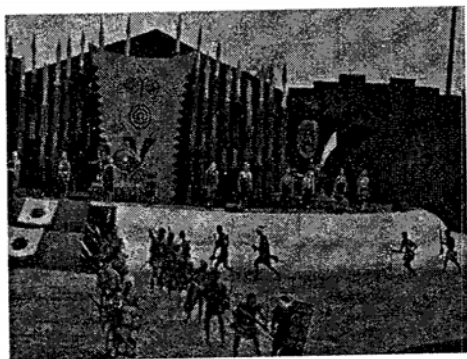
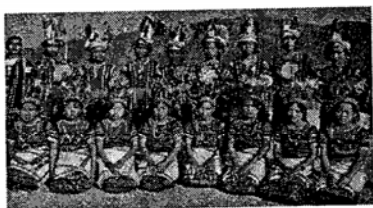












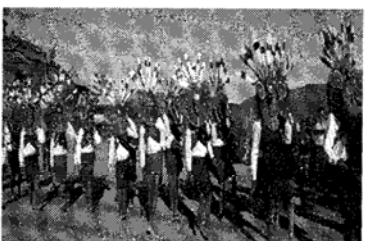




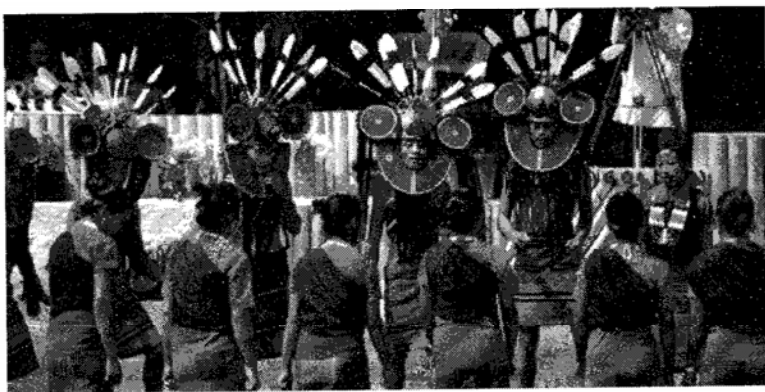


















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